

FOREIGN POLICY
FROM A
BACK BENCH

1904-1918

*A STUDY BASED ON THE PAPERS OF
LORD NOEL-BUXTON*

By

T. P. CONWELL-EVANS

WITH INTRODUCTORY NOTES

BY THE RT. HON.

LORD NOEL-BUXTON

AND

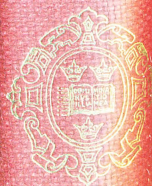
G. P. GOOCH, D.LITT., F.B.A.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
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By the same Author

THE LEAGUE COUNCIL
IN ACTION

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

By LORD NOEL-BUXTON

I AM glad if the records of a back-bench participant in foreign affairs have provided a study from a new angle of an important period of our history.

The only ground for publishing such personal papers as mine is that they serve some public purpose, and this is Mr. Conwell-Evans' object. He seeks to throw some light on the attempts of individual Parliamentarians, and of organized groups, to influence Governmental policy in matters affecting peace and war, from 1904 to 1918.

I hope that such a view of the period may prove of value not only to students of history, but also to those who devote their energies to the promotion of peace and good understanding between nations.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

By G. P. GOOCH, D.LITT., F.B.A.

WHILE taking no responsibility for the opinions expressed in this volume, I welcome the testimony of an old and valued friend who has seen a good deal of history in the making and who at certain moments before and during the war has helped to make it. Most of the protagonists in the mighty struggle of diplomacy and arms have told their story; and their evidence must always remain of primary importance, since their official positions gave them inside knowledge which the rest of us lacked. But there is also room and need for the unofficial witness who has specialized in foreign affairs, who has discussed international problems on the spot with representative citizens of different countries, who has taken part in movements seeking to influence the Government in matters of foreign policy, and who has expounded his views in Parliament and the Press. I am glad that Lord Noel-Buxton, not with any desire to proclaim his wisdom or to boast his influence, has supplied the material for this record, which forms a contribution to the history of some ever-memorable years in the life of England and the world.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

VAST libraries are already filled with books dealing with the march of events, the clash of forces, and the conduct of men during the period of the world war and the years immediately preceding it. But one searches with little hope of success for studies throwing light on the activities of unofficial groups of people in the chief belligerent countries who worked strenuously to avert the struggle and who felt that the policy pursued by their Governments, however peaceful in intention, could not but lead to war. Inspired by similar public-spirited motives, these groups for the most part persisted during the War in attempts to shorten the struggle by striving to promote negotiation on an honourable basis, and in the advocacy of means of preventing such catastrophes in the future.

Were they able to exert any material influence on the course of events? Can they be said to have played a useful role? To attempt to find an answer to such questions is important. For in these groups one recognizes those articulate sections of the vast masses of ordinary men and women who desire to live at peace with their neighbours. They constitute an important element of that public opinion upon which depends the successful working of international instruments such as the Kellogg Pact and the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The writer, therefore, welcomes an opportunity offered by the study of the papers of a private Member of Parliament (who afterwards became a Cabinet Minister) of giving a view—necessarily incomplete and furnishing

merely a cross-section, albeit an important one—of a rather elusive subject which in its entirety should include the intermittent and scantily recorded activities of unofficial groups in more than one country.

In attempting to give, accordingly, from this angle some account of the activities in regard to foreign affairs of Mr. Noel Buxton (now Lord Noel-Buxton) before and during the war, the writer has kept constantly in view—except in the third chapter—the fact that Mr. Buxton was typical of those Members of Parliament, and publicists and writers, some of whom endeavoured from 1903 onwards to diminish the danger of war in the Near East by attempting to reform the harsh rule of the Turks; others from the year 1910 or 1911 set themselves the hard task of attempting to put an end to Anglo-German rivalry; others again during the war never ceased to urge the ascertainment of aims in the hope of finding a suitable opportunity of negotiating peace.

Above all, this brief study will show something of the interplay between the two sections of opinion which generally divide a nation when faced by the issues of peace and war, the clash between the ideals of humanity and those of a narrow patriotism harmful to itself. On the one hand, we perceive the long view untouched by the passions of the hour, which sees in a negotiated peace the twofold advantage of bringing the war to an end quickly and of producing a comparatively durable settlement. On the other, we see the wastefulness of the short view which hankers after the fruits of a crushing victory, and which soon is to find that the prizes of a dictated settlement are illusory, and have been won at unnecessary cost, for they must yield, when men have recovered their calm, to treaty revision.

On the one side, one observes the attempt to hold tenaciously to reasonable aims in a world in which chance has become the arbiter of fate, for especially is it true of war that men who have raised the wind cannot ride the whirlwind—the results of deliberate planning in war are 90 per cent. due to chance, and 10 per cent. to human foresight, as General Smuts said on one occasion. On the other side, one sees the leading actors playing with chance, putting forth maximum demands when victory seems near, and reducing them to reasonable proportions when victory seems more remote. The book will show little of the submergence of the forces of reason in the torrent of war passion which swept through the channels of the popular Press. For here the clash of opinion takes place in the more tolerant atmosphere of the House of Commons, and in intercourse with Ministers and other responsible people.

The reader will probably be impressed with the small part which the House of Commons was allowed to play in the formulation of foreign policy and with the little control which democratic England could exercise over her destiny.

If finally a picture of the insuperable difficulties confronting the efforts of the peace parties in pre-war days can by contrast bring out the value of the changes effected by the League of Nations in inter-State relations, and in the work of maintaining peace, the writing of this volume will be sufficiently justified.

For permission to publish letters and interviews, thanks are cordially expressed to Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Buckmaster, Sir Maurice de Bunsen, Mr. Churchill, the Marquess of Crewe, General Smuts, Mr. Philip Graves, Colonel House, Admiral Sir George King-Hall,

Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, Mr. D. D. Braham, Mr. R. W. Graves, and Lord Tyrrell. With none of the above, nor with Lord Noel-Buxton, are to be associated approval or disapproval of the views and comments expressed by the writer.

T. P. CONWELL-EVANS.

14 FROGNAL GARDENS,
LONDON, N.W. 3.

1932.

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THE GLADSTONIAN TRADITION
IN THE NEAR EAST

THE BALKAN COMMITTEE

THOSE regions of Europe and Asia Minor known as the Near East provided, at the opening of the twentieth-century, material for problems of first-class importance; the peace of the world, in fact, hung on the nature of their solution, and they provided some of the most potent causes of the Great War.

Throughout the nineteenth century the future of the Turkish Empire was the concern of the Great Powers of Europe; its vast regions stimulated the covetous ambitions of the Empires of France, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Great Britain. Russia's designs were the earliest and most threatening, which the Concert attempted to hold in check by the Treaties of Paris and Berlin. The precarious equilibrium of the thrusts and stresses of converging imperialisms began to break apart at the beginning of the twentieth century. The spectacle, the strangeness of which must impress the student to an increasing degree as it recedes into history,—the spectacle of civilized powers abandoning themselves to a scramble for territory and a struggle for dominance entered at this period upon its culminating phase. Other forces besides those of economic imperialism fought for mastery in these regions: on the one hand, the racial struggle between Slav and Teuton, on the outcome of which the future of the Austro-Hungarian Empire depended; on the other, the determination of the Balkan peoples to throw off completely the Turkish yoke. These national aspirations added themselves to the stresses which came from without.

The sympathies of British travellers in the Near East

about 1900 were aroused by the distress and misery of the Christian populations in Asia Minor and in Turkish Europe. Their sufferings were very severe during the last eight or nine years of Abdul Hamid's rule—a period during which the Sultan piled one oppressive measure after another upon his non-Turk subjects in an attempt to assimilate them by force and to hold his possessions in a firm grip, as the thrusts of the Great Powers interlocked themselves across his Empire. His hold was further secured for a time by the skill with which he played off one Power against another. This game he conducted with such success that the Concert seldom sang in unison. If it succeeded in doing so, its voice was so feeble as to be useless, for the reforms in Turkish administration which it attempted on successive occasions, from the time of the Treaty of Berlin onwards, secured next to nothing for the oppressed subjects of the Sultan.

The moving spirit in all these attempts was, of course, Great Britain, stirred to action by the campaigns of a most powerful advocate, William Ewart Gladstone. His interventions, before and after the period of the Berlin Conference, when he succeeded in rousing his country against the mis-government of Adbul Hamid, had established a tradition which public men were to follow in later years, and which gained for Britain its reputation for humanity and its role as champion of oppressed peoples. In the churches of all persuasions, more especially in the large Nonconformist group, ready support was usually to be obtained for such causes; they provided a body of responsive opinion such as existed in no other country. Mr. Buxton's contribution was to find for eminent publicists a platform where discussions could be carried on and opinion could be formed in a way which left no room for the more emotional and crude appeals to which some of Gladstone's followers were wont to resort. He sought

to create an informed opinion which, coming from influential people, Governments could not ignore. For this purpose he conceived the idea of forming a permanent association of public men, writers, statesmen, historians, and travellers, specially equipped by their own personal observations to formulate views about happenings in the Near East.

He was fortunate in obtaining the co-operation of Lord Bryce (then the Right Hon. James Bryce, M.P.), whose great knowledge, experience, and renown proved invaluable in executing the plan. Replying to Mr. Buxton's invitation (5 July, 1903) Lord Bryce wrote:

'I entirely agree that a Committee to watch the progress of events in Macedonia and the Turkish East generally is needed. . . The Committee ought for the present to be confined to obtaining and diffusing information and views, exciting interest in the subject and advocating measures calculated to secure peace, and put an end to oppression, bloodshed and cruelty without directly challenging any of the Powers with which a Liberal Government might have to deal.'

Lord Bryce's acceptance of the office of President gave the Balkan Committee, as Mr. Buxton named it, a very good start, and secured the active sympathy and support of distinguished names. Indeed, during the first five or six years of its life, the Balkan Committee played a very considerable role in influencing opinion and the Government of the day. The response from the public in all parts of the country to the first efforts of the Committee was, indeed, remarkable. In several of the large provincial towns, public meetings were convened by the Mayors or Provosts, and several Bishops, (Hereford, Lincoln, Worcester, Oxford), acting with the publicly expressed approval of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the chief leaders of the Nonconformist churches, the heads of some of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and members of both Houses of Parliament, took part in the national campaign with

which the Balkan Committee opened its career. Among the many members of Parliament who took part in deputations and meetings may be mentioned J. A. Simon (afterwards Sir John Simon, who became foreign Secretary in 1931), and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, (afterwards Prime Minister in four Governments). During the years 1903-7, the public demonstrations held in London under its auspices, culminating, in 1907, in a deputation to Sir E. Grey led by the Archbishop of Canterbury himself were so widely representative of the national life that no Government could dismiss the views conveyed to it as an artificial product of a propagandist society. At this time, in response to the representations of the Committee,¹ the Foreign Office, successively under Lord Lansdowne and Sir E. Grey, felt impelled temporarily to depart from its customary reticence and polite acknowledgements. It gave long reasoned replies promising action, and action in fact the Government

¹ Members and supporters included:

The Earl of Aberdeen.	The Bishop of Hereford.
Canon Barnett.	Canon Scott Holland.
Mr. J. D. Bouchier.	Mr. Hugh Law, M.P.
Lady Boyle.	The Earl of Lytton.
Sir E. Boyle, Bt.	Canon Maccoll.
Mr. H. N. Brailsford.	Mr. C. F. G. Masterman.
Lord Brassey.	Mr. H. Nevinson.
Mr. Charles Buxton.	Mr. Arthur Ponsonby.
Mr. Noel Buxton.	Mr. Albert Spicer.
Mr. George Cadbury.	Lord Stanmore.
Lady Frederick Cavendish.	Mr. C. P. Trevelyan, M.P.
The Rev. Dr. Clifford.	Mr. George Trevelyan.
Miss M. E. Durham.	Mr. L. Villari.
Sir Arthur Evans, F.R.S.	Mr. W. A. Moore.
Lord Farrer.	Prof. Westlake.
Lord E. Fitzmaurice, M.P.	Mr. P. W. Wilson.
Mr. A. G. Gardiner.	The Bishop of Worcester.
Mr. H. Gladstone, M.P.	Mr. Hilton Young.
Mr. G. P. Gooch.	and
Bishop Gore.	Mr. R. A. Scott James,
Mr. J. L. Hammond.	(Secretary).

did not fail to take on several occasions in an attempt to induce the Concert to function.

For a brief period, so influential at home, the Committee enjoyed abroad, especially in the Near East and in Austria-Hungary, a reputation to which distance added its enchantment, and which secured during several years the publication in the European press of its views, commented upon by editorial articles—a reputation which survived long after its influence in England had become restricted. In Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkan Committee retained a legendary fame up to the outbreak of the Great War.

MACEDONIA

The attention of the Committee was specially centred on Macedonia which, though only one of several provinces of Turkey, was of pivotal importance to its possessor, as it held the key to Turkish rule in Europe. For this reason, too, the rival Powers, Russia and Austria-Hungary, coveted the province as an outpost of Empire. In 1878 Turkey all but lost it to Russian influence, but it was a British Prime Minister, Disraeli, who, fearing Russian domination in the Balkan Peninsula, tore up the San Stefano settlement, and restored the region to the sovereignty of the Sultan.

Our national responsibility for keeping a people under the harrow in order to serve British ends was the factor which, in Mr. Buxton's view, should have acted as a stimulus and driven to action every Briton who was aware of it.

The strategic importance of Macedonia was no less valued by the three peoples, Greeks, Bulgars, and Serbs; for each of them indeed it provided the focal point of their aspirations and ambitions, and they disputed the region almost as bitterly among themselves as with their common enemy, the Turk, whilst the latter revelled in their quarrels and intensified them, acting on the principle of 'divide et impera'.

It was not surprising, in these circumstances, that the Balkan Committee should give so much prominence in their discussions and activities to the question of Macedonia. Apart from the political importance of the province, the condition of the inhabitants was in itself sufficient to attract the attention of publicists. Victims of so many conflicting forces, their lot was indeed hard. They lived in circumstances of chaos and anarchy—a prey not only to the cruelties of the Turkish administration, but also to the violent nationalizing methods of the Greeks, Bulgars, and Serbs. Each tried to stake out a claim for the future by setting up as many schools as possible. Schools, indeed, were the only redeeming feature of their lot: in every other respect their existence was pitiful in the extreme.

‘The ordinary life of the Macedonian peasant,’ wrote Mr. Buxton in 1902, in one of his earliest writings on the subject issued jointly with his brother Charles, as members of the Balkan Committee, ‘whether Bulgarian, Servian, or Vlach, is one of grinding misery. The exasperating methods of taxation; the degrading poverty of an industrious people; the unbridled tyranny of the *zaptieh* (Turkish gendarme); the irresponsible power of the armed Mohammedan over his unarmed serfs; the absolute insecurity of property, life, and chastity in which the peasant must make shift to live—these are obvious to the most casual traveller.

‘But the sympathy of Liberal Europe must be even more deeply moved when it realizes that the sufferers are not merely fellow-men and co-religionists; that they are capable of progress and with a genuine passion for education. The index to the character of the Macedonian is given by the precedent furnished in Bulgaria. Twenty-five years ago Bulgaria was in the position of Macedonia to-day. Now there is an absolute consensus of opinion that Bulgaria is to Macedonia as civilization is to barbarism. The land (in Bulgaria) is coming increasingly under cultivation, houses are rising where none stood before. Every village has its school and every town its college. Pomaks and Turkish Moslems live at peace with their Christian rulers.

Friendly tolerance is shown to a growing Protestant community. Commerce is weaving its network over the face of the country.'

And he contrasts the state of the country twenty-five years before under the Turks when the inhabitants were 'little better than slaves'.

Mr. Buxton held that the problem was not so insoluble as some writers and travellers were inclined to think. Valentine Chirol, for instance, in his entrancing book *Fifty Years of a Changing World*, does not in his references to Macedonia allow for the fact that the Turk deliberately 'fostered elements of discord'. To quote Mr. Buxton again:

'he has so jerrymandered his territorial divisions that as far as possible no nationality shall predominate in any one of them. Where, as at Kumanova, the people were wholly Bulgarian, he creates a Serb propaganda by assigning to the Patriarch some lands of the Bulgarian Church. Where, again, the Bulgarian makes no claim he develops, as at Prizrend, a congregation of Wallachs. It would be the slow but not difficult task of a European Governor to take a census, to rectify these boundaries, and to discover the racial tendencies of the population. The work of Austria in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and of the Powers in Lebanon and Crete are standing examples.'

For the moment the Balkan Committee confined itself to the limited objective of the appointment of a European Governor, and the establishment of security and equal rights for the Christian subjects: 'Not till these are given can the question of territorial division be adequately examined, much less finally decided.'

The meetings of the Balkan Committee played a notable part at this time (1903-7) in attempting, on occasion, to strengthen the hands of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, who invited public expressions of opinion in support of his policy of pressing for reforms at a moment when Austria-Hungary and Russia were reluctant to pursue their joint attempts

embodied in the Murzteg Reforms.¹ The latter proposals, which provided neutral officers with merely advisory powers, completely failed to bring about any improvement in Turkish administration, and the state of the Christian population went from bad to worse.

The joint statement issued by Lord Bryce and Mr. Buxton in 1904 illustrates the view then taken. One of the most important duties of the Concert was held to be the exercise of a mandate on behalf of the misgoverned peoples—a mandate to be exercised by the Concert as a whole and not by any particular group of its members:

‘Lord Lansdowne has indicated the value that he attaches to expressions of public feeling with regard to Macedonia; and the position in the Balkan Peninsula continues to be so grave and menacing that it seems necessary once more to state the policy which, in our opinion, the Western Powers, and Great Britain in particular, ought to pursue with a view to the preservation of peace and the improvement of the condition of the European provinces of Turkey. English public opinion has, we believe, never approved the policy of a “mandate” to Austria-Hungary and Russia to settle the Balkan question. That policy failed entirely to prevent the carnival of bloodshed and cruelty to which the recent Blue-book bears such terrible witness; and it has done nothing to remove the existing danger and unrest. The two Empires have now had the field to themselves since February 1903—a whole year. It is four months since the other Powers supported them in a further so-called scheme of reform. These four months have been a time of enforced quiet, during which, if ever, progress might have been made, or at least some promise given of future good government. What has been the result?

‘The answer is nothing. Outrage and murder continue as before. Wholesale arrests are taking place and hundreds of Christians, merely suspected of being possible rebels, have been

¹ The reforms proposed by Austria and Russia did not go far enough to satisfy Lord Lansdowne, but he nevertheless took the initiative in imposing them on a reluctant Turkey, when he induced the Concert to authorize a naval demonstration at Mitylene in 1905.

deported to the prisons of Asia Minor. Very many thousands of people, whose villages were burned last summer would have perished this winter but for the relief sent from England, for which £27,000 has already been subscribed. Even this work has been hindered and the hospitals themselves are still interfered with. The burned villages are being charged with new taxes. For the Adrianople Vilayet no reforms whatever are suggested; so that not even a pretence is made in this large province of discharging the obligations assumed by Great Britain in the Treaty of Berlin. The best part of the Austro-Russian proposals—the command of the *gendarmie* by a European general—has been so delayed that no good result has yet been achieved, and at the best it affords little hope so long as the provincial Governor is still a Turkish official who does not wish it to succeed.

‘As to the future, the dual control promises no improvement. On the contrary, the situation is to-day more dangerous than ever. The peasants have nothing now to lose, and the moment is rapidly approaching when—if no preventive measures are taken—the Macedonian question will be forced once more, by fresh bloodshed and outrage, upon the attention of Europe. The insurrection will be followed, in the opinion of the most competent observers, by a war between Turkey and Bulgaria. In a word, the dual control has failed. It has had its trial and has been found wanting. And the fatal weakness in the present “scheme of reforms” as well as in its predecessor lies in the opportunities it gives the Turk of making it ineffectual by the obstacles and delays he is so skilful in interposing. . . .

‘The alternative proposal is no new one, but one which has already been tried elsewhere with success, and which it is believed British opinion has already approved, i.e. the appointment of a Christian Governor, not himself a Turkish subject, for Macedonia. Lord Lansdowne himself has put it forward in his despatch of September 29, 1902, and the party of action in Macedonia has declared itself willing to be content with it. This Governor should when appointed be independent of Turkish control, and responsible, not to the two Empires alone, but to the six Great Powers. The Russian Government cannot afford to lose its prestige with the Orthodox Church and the Pan-Slavist Committees by appearing to oppose reform, and

if the English Government were to make a definite and drastic proposal, and to undertake to join in the measures necessary to secure its acceptance by the Turks, there can be little doubt, especially under the new conditions of the last two months, that the plan proposed would be adopted.'

The Balkan Committee found the Foreign Office more difficult to move under Sir E. Grey's régime. The Liberal Foreign Secretary feared that action would offend Mohammedan feeling in Egypt. Mr. Louis Mallet, Sir Edward's Secretary, informed Mr. Buxton (11 May, 1906) that 'Sir Edward wrote some days ago to O'Connor [the British Ambassador in Constantinople] about the practicability of asking for an extension of the gendarmerie powers, if the Sultan remains recalcitrant. He has most carefully considered the possibility of doing something for Macedonia at this juncture, but is hampered by the fear of stirring up Mohammedan feeling and in this matter he must defer to Lord Cromer'. For a time, indeed, Sir E. Grey seemed to show a marked indifference to the Macedonian question, and he displeased many influential Liberals. His coldness came 'with a shock to those of us' wrote a writer in the *Nation*, 'who recall the historic tradition of Liberalism in the Near East, and assume a necessary connexion between democracy and humanity'.

The year 1907 marked an important stage in the campaign of the Balkan Committee, when views were placed before Sir Edward Grey by the Archbishop of Canterbury leading a deputation of bishops, Non-conformist leaders, a score of members of both Houses of Parliament, and representative citizens.

Sir Edward Grey had laid himself specially open to criticism for consenting to an increase in the Turkish customs tariff without obtaining a *quid pro quo*, the assent, in fact, of Turkey to Lord Lansdowne's plan of a Commission of the Powers enjoying executive and administrative authority in Macedonia. Seldom

does one find an Archbishop of Canterbury venturing to criticize the policy of a Secretary of State with the frankness which marked the address of Dr. Davidson on that occasion. The circumstance reveals the keen interest which public opinion was able to manifest in the cause of Macedonia at that time—a sympathy which was aroused by the spectacle of Christians maltreated by a Moslem tyrant almost in the heart of Christian Europe.

The intensity of feeling aroused by the sufferings of the Macedonians may seem surprising in these days when people have the experience of the Great War behind them, and the ugly minority problems of the post-war years, not to speak of violent revolutions, which have drained almost dry the wells of sympathy with the sufferers. For neither in this nor in any other regard is man's capacity unlimited. Readers of the post-war generation can, however, readily see in the energy and spirit of the spokesmen of humane opinion in those days an eloquent testimony to the comparative tranquillity and comfort which Western civilization had reached in the pre-war age, and to which an Asiatic tyranny over Christian peoples living almost under the shadow of the walls of Vienna offered an intolerable and monstrous paradox.

‘The account of the horrors and miseries that are existing,’ declared the Archbishop of Canterbury in his speech at the Foreign Office, ‘taken only from our Consular reports, are black enough to justify almost any outcry. If it is true that in three vilayets alone there were 1,300 murders, or people done to death, it does not seem to be much to ask that these things come to an end.’

‘I do want to press the point that the greatest evil of all would be that we should know that the evils are going on, and that we should be content to do nothing. I do not know of anything which seems to me more likely to sap the moral sense of the people than that we should be aware of the ghastly deeds taking

place, that we should be able in some degree to diminish them, and that for one reason or another we should not be doing so.'

'I do not underrate the enormous difficulties. We have been reminded until some of us are almost tired of it that the conflict between the Greek and the Bulgarian is so acute and so complex that the difficulties are mainly in that quarter rather than in the remitting of them both to the governing Power. . . .'

Referring to the increase in the customs tariff, the Archbishop said:

'I find it exceedingly difficult to trace in the more recent correspondence that the condition (i.e. control of administration in Macedonia) still remains a condition at all. It seems to some of us as if it had disappeared, and if it has disappeared then the one little lever upon which some of us at least were relying for a good deal of pressure has lost a good deal of its force. . . . The British public have certainly never understood that we were to be in this matter the mere echoes of the wishes of Austria and Russia, or that we were to leave to them the suggestion of the manner in which reforms might be carried out.'

It is also interesting to note the views of the Free Churches expressed by Dr. Horton, the then President of the National Free Church Council.

'Perhaps we, as Free Churchmen,' he declared, 'appeal peculiarly strongly, because from the first we protested in 1878 against leaving any part of the Balkan Peninsula under the control of the Turkish Government. When I passed through Bulgaria last year and saw the smiling prosperity of the country and the prospect that is eventually before every part of the Balkan Peninsula directly it is liberated from the Turk, I felt again the old sting of shame that the English Government should have ever raised a finger to protect the rule of the Turk in any part of Europe. . . . We Free Churchmen believe most passionately in a spirited foreign policy, but we do not understand by that a policy of aggression nor a policy of extension of British territory, but rather the constant and regular employment of the great influence of this country to protect the weak, to relieve the oppressed and secure the kindly light of civilization for every backward and unfortunate State. We desire not merely super-

vision but absolute control by responsible European authorities of the whole government and administration of Macedonia.'

In his reply to the Archbishop, Sir Edward Grey did not immediately promise any specific action, but there is no doubt that the Primate's intervention induced him later to overcome the reluctance of the Foreign Office, constantly pre-occupied with the susceptibilities of Moslems in India and Egypt, to make the efforts which in his memoirs he describes as 'intolerably wearisome, very disagreeable, and painfully futile'. Though action was opposed to British commercial interests in Turkey, 'humanitarian feeling in Britain,' he writes,¹ 'and the persisting sympathy for Christian populations under Turkish rule was so strong that British political and material interests were overborne by it,' and he was impelled later in the same year to make a final though vain attempt to galvanize the Concert into some vestige of life. He made a vigorous call to the Powers to join in requiring the Sultan to grant, among other things, executive powers to the officers attached as advisers to the gendarmerie. This effort he renewed in the following year when in a determined despatch to the Powers he proposed the appointment of an independent Governor.

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An aspect of the Balkan Committee's campaign, which is perhaps worth noting, was its public advocacy of the duty of the Concert to intervene at times of crises to prevent war and remove its causes—an idea familiar chiefly to the rulers and historians of that time. Professor Westlake, the distinguished international lawyer who had succeeded Lord Bryce as the Chairman of the Committee, spoke frequently for the Committee in that sense. Speaking at Manchester in 1907 he said:

'The European Concert has proved itself on more than one

¹ Lord Grey of Falloden, *Twenty-Five Years*, vol. i, p. 172.

occasion a good instrument for settling crises. . . . The moment any one of these crises has been settled, the Powers fall back again into apathy. If there came a crisis, a great movement in the Balkan Peninsula which threatened to lead to war and to European complications, the Government would have the greatest sympathy of the people if they stirred up the Concert to a sense of there being impending one of those crises in which alone the Concert was of any utility. The point from which danger was apprehended was that Bulgaria, the new State created in 1878, might no longer tolerate the misgovernment that oppressed the population of Macedonia.'

Sir Edward Grey in 1908 was to endorse these views: 'In discussing the Macedonian question,' he declared, 'you are never free from the Turkish question, which has more than once led to a European war. As long as the Concert exists you have a certain guarantee that the question will not lead to war.'

One sees here the recognition of the principle which later was to be permanently embodied in the supreme function of the Council of the League of Nations.

THE RISE OF THE YOUNG TURKS

Of all possible solutions no one had dreamt that voluntary reform from within would be one. But in the summer of 1908 the world was taken by surprise. A secret organization of young officers, calling themselves 'Young Turks' had been stirred to action by the fear that foreign control would become actual through the co-operation of England and Russia, a possibility suggested by the meeting at Reval of King Edward and the Tsar of Russia. As soon as they were sure of support from large sections of the Army, the Young Turks, accordingly, acted without hesitation; they invaded the Sultan's palace, effected a bloodless revolution, and became the effective rulers of the country, although Abdul Hamid was nominally left in control for a time. When the Young Turks, promising

constitutional government, gained the support of the subject races, it became evident that the Powers would cease to work for foreign control. On the other hand, those who, like Mr. Buxton, had intimate knowledge of the country, were loth to lose such influence as the European gendarmerie officers had already acquired. Mr. Buxton and Sir A. Evans attempted to impress their views on Sir Edward Grey. When, however, an emissary of the Balkan Committee, Mr. W. A. Moore, after a visit to the country, gave a favourable report of the friendly attitude of the non-Turk communities, the members of the Balkan Committee decided to give qualified support to the experiment.

Their attitude was dictated not by any feeling that the Young Turks could be fully trusted. Rather was it based on the conviction that to refuse to work with them would have been foolish, and that it would be rash to miss the opportunity which the circumstances offered of obtaining for Great Britain an influence over them. The Young Turks had never liked the Kaiser's compromising friendship with the Sultan, and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in October 1908, a few weeks after the Revolution, alienated still more their sympathies from the Teutonic Powers.

There were other considerations which led the Balkan Committee to support the new régime. The impact of Western civilization had thrown the Near East into a ferment of contending factions which fought for an idea of nationality based on western examples of compact linguistic unities. This idea—of a single-nation State—could not, and can never be applied to Eastern Europe. A way out seemed to be offered by the experiment of a tolerant and more liberal government affording security of life and property to its various subject races. The alternative lay in a crude application of the national idea by the dominant race, determined,

if it could not assimilate the various races, to make life so intolerable as to compel them in large numbers to leave their homes and seek refuge in other countries, or to eliminate them by the more simple method of massacre.

Accordingly, when the Christians in Macedonia saw in the disorder into which the Porte was thrown by the events of the revolution an unexpected opportunity for striking a blow for their independence, Mr. Buxton sent counsels of moderation. He feared that if hostilities broke out between the Young Turks and Bulgaria, an end would at once be put to any chance of reform within the Turkish dominions. The fate not only of the Macedonian population but of the Greeks and Armenians in Asia Minor was plainly involved.

‘The Bulgarian Agent’s declaration’, Mr. Buxton wrote in *The Times*, ‘that “Bulgaria has no intention of forcing matters to the point of war” does something to allay a very natural alarm. . . . The two creditable features of recent Near-Eastern history have been the clean hands of Great Britain and the correct diplomacy of the Bulgarians. They do not lose their heads. They know that public respect abroad, and especially in this country, where alone it is organized, is a valuable asset; they hold that any aggressive act of theirs would forfeit utterly the sympathy of the body which has done most for their conationals in Macedonia—the Balkan Committee (and in that view I believe them to be correct); they are the last to forget that if Bulgaria can count upon the support of Great Britain, it is owing to the fact that hitherto she has “played the game”.

‘It is because her progress has been so marvellous, her position as a morally independent State so assured, that it would be disastrous if Bulgaria put herself in the wrong. It would be (if that were possible) even more deplorable that she should prove herself the unwitting tool of Powers who would seize the fruits of her action for themselves.’

Again, in a telegram to the Macedonian Internal Organization at Salonika (September 1908), Mr. Buxton stated that ‘the English friends of Macedonia trust

that, in the present crisis, the Macedonian Christians will demonstrate their unshaken loyalty to the Constitution, and to the Committee of Union and Progress, which has rescued their country from bloodshed'. In order further to promote a peaceful issue of the impending trouble he telegraphed, on behalf of the Balkan Committee, to Enver Bey, one of the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, the hope that the 'deplorable external complications which have arisen will not lead to any violation of the peace, which is so essential for the completion of the great task which Enver Bey had so nobly begun'.

This attitude of the Balkan Committee was warmly supported by *The Times*. It proved to Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria that he would be left without a friend in England, if he persisted in his intentions and provoked an outbreak of war.

'No well-informed Bulgarian', ran *The Times* leader (30 September 1908) 'can doubt the enthusiasm of the Chairman of the Balkan Committee for their cause, or the sincerity of his admiration for their policy in the past. He has proved them by word and by deed for many years. He is confident that in the present crisis Bulgaria will be true to herself and to her past. Yet he does not deem it superfluous to remind her how disastrous it would be to her and to her reputation in England were she to take a false step upon her own account now, or to be duped into becoming the unwitting tool of the ambitions of others.'

The Foreign Editor of *The Times*, Mr. D. D. Braham, urged the same course.

'The breakdown of the new régime', he wrote to Mr. Buxton (21 October 1908), '(and I am very anxious about all the difficulties I see coming), would be such a calamity that we ought to do everything in our power to help the young Turks. You can do a very great deal in that way. Fitzmaurice [dragoman of the British Embassy at Constantinople] wrote me only the other day that they crave for foreign, especially English, encouragement and sympathy.'

Sir Edward Grey gave the weight of his approval.

‘I think that the line taken by the Balkan Committee’, he wrote to Mr. Buxton (14 October 1908), ‘during this crisis is sound and should do good, and I hope you will continue to impress upon the Bulgarians the necessity of not seeking further advantages at the expense of the present régime in Turkey, and I shall not fail to take advantage of your offer to use the influence of your Committee whenever the opportunity arises.

‘Meanwhile, of course, any action you take independently to influence Bulgarians in the direction of moderation and restraint is very wholesome.’

Lord Bryce, who had become British Ambassador at Washington, added his support. In a letter 25 November 1908, he wrote:

‘My dear Noel,

‘I am afraid that the Bulgarians may have been surprised by British action and may not have understood fully that it has been dictated not by any want of sympathy with them but entirely by our feeling that the reforming party in Turkey ought to have a chance, and that an opportunity, which has never before arisen in history, for a reconciliation of Christians and Mussulmans on the basis of good feeling and equality ought not to be lost but turned to the best account in view of the future.

‘Have you reason to think that this misconception prevails in Bulgaria? If so, could it be removed? It is not possible for me (for reasons which you will understand) to take any action, as I should have done had I been a private person in England. But it occurs to me to consider whether you might not get the Bulgarians to appreciate our position, because they will trust you and believe your assurances that our sympathy with them has not declined. It is important politically that they should realize this. Perhaps you may think that you had better not do this unless after previous communication with the F.O.,¹ or perhaps you may have done it already. Anyhow, you can think the matter over. We are agreed as to policy. Never did I expect

¹ F.O.—Foreign Office.

to be supporting Turks; but the course you have taken and that the Government have taken seems under these changed conditions to be perfectly right.

‘Always truly yours,
(Sgd.) ‘JAMES BRYCE.’

To further this policy, Mr. Buxton and other representative members of the Balkan Committee accepted an invitation from the Committee of Union and Progress to visit Constantinople. The visit of publicists whose views of the Turkish régime had until recently been so profoundly adverse, caused a great stir. Turkish newspapers showed great satisfaction with their visit, and were pleased to note that their action in the past was not inspired by any hostile sentiments towards the Turkish people, but was directed solely against the oppressive Hamidian régime. They welcomed their views as indicating the existence in England of an honest and widespread sympathy for Turkish Liberalism.

Sir Edwin Pears, the correspondent of the *Daily News* at Constantinople, testified to the value of the visit in one of his interesting dispatches (8 August 1908):

... ‘While it has been recognized that they have no connexion with His Majesty’s Government, they have been received everywhere as representing a body of Englishmen who have worked for the better government of the people of Macedonia without distinction of race.

‘It should be noted that the prominent members of the Young Turkey Party in particular have recognized that this was the object of the Committee. I was present at a formal reception given by the Turkish to the English Committee, and one of the speakers who knew Macedonia well stated that the reforms put forward by England and France were clearly intended to benefit Moslems and Christians alike; and it was on this ground especially that the Turks welcomed them. Their presence in Constantinople has accentuated the friendly feelings towards England.

‘They went to the Salamlik without any expectation of having an interview with the Sultan, but after they had seen the show the Sultan sent his compliments, as he invariably does, to the

visitors, and at the last moment asked that they might be presented to him. They consented to this proposal on condition that the members of the Turkish Committee should accompany them. Mr. Noel Buxton, the President, in reply to the Sultan's welcome, explained simply that they were guests of the Young Turkey Party, and declared that he was glad to see the Sultan as a constitutional sovereign.

'The Grand Vizier subsequently invited them to dinner, and Young Turkey took care that the Mosques and show places were opened to men whom they regarded as friends of all races in Turkey. I had the pleasure of introducing them to the Sheik-ul-Islam, who, in the course of his interview, repeated the assurances which he had given me to send to your readers three months ago, assurances of his conviction that the religion of Islam recognized the brotherhood and the equality of Moslems, Christians, and Jews, and who further declared that he and the ulema were well satisfied with the manner in which the idea of constitutional government was being received throughout the Empire.'

On his return to London, Mr. Buxton gave Sir Edward Grey a considered statement of his views of the Young Turks, and showed that he did not expect too much from them. The possibility of their falling back into the old ways of Abdul Hamid was a real one, and Mr. Buxton saw in British support a means of keeping them straight.

'The Balkan Committee', Mr. Buxton wrote to Sir Edward Grey, 'finds itself with two different motives to keep in view. On the one hand it desires to help constitutional Turkey as the best hope of order in the Near East. Having cultivated close relations with the Committee of Union, it has perhaps various means of assisting the reformers.

'On the other hand, it must retain its independence because there is a danger of failure on the part of the Turks to keep order. They may fail from want of energy in particular. One strong motive for assisting attempts to improve public order will arise from the desire to retain the friendship of England. It is not desirable, therefore, that they should regard this friendship as secure under all circumstances. In this position I hope that

my Committee is exactly reflecting the attitude of the British Government. The reformers in Turkey are equally desirous that the aid of England should be cordial, and active on the one hand, but absolutely conditional on the other. This is only to be explained by the fact that political forces in Turkey are deeply divided and that the hopeful elements are far more hostile to the Hamidian party than we in England can believe.

‘It appears that the problem is, while retaining and making clear the absolutely conditional nature of British friendship, to find means for practically assisting the new régime, whether material and financial aid are given or not. It is essential that the eyes of the Young Turks should be kept upon England. They are inclined now, to use a slang phrase, to play up to England, and even if we do no more we may keep them in this state of mind, which forms the necessary influence in their reforming ambition, without risky or expensive sacrifices. This may be done by showing that the British Government is giving close attention and desires to help them in educational ways. Undoubtedly the Ambassador will follow in the steps of Canning and make himself much more than an ambassador. Among other means I think that the offer to attach Turks to public departments in this country . . . would be one of the stimulating forces among many which the Foreign Office would be best able to suggest.’

This conception merited greater attention than the Foreign Office was disposed to give it. In Lord Bryce’s opinion it was certainly worth trying, as his letter shows.

‘British Embassy,
Washington.

‘March 14th, 1909.

‘I agree with the idea, and see no objection unless the one that the old Turks might be still rather suspicious of the Young Turks if the latter were trained in England, yet this did not prevent Abdul Hamid from sending officers to Germany to be trained.

‘Of course, the Germans may be jealous, but then they received Turks before and sent their men to Turkey to train Turks there. So they are not entitled to complain. But though

I think the Foreign Office and other Departments would do well to give all facilities, and might let you tell your Turkish friends that facilities will be given, still it will be better that the request should come from them and that they should appear as the moving spirit in the matter.

‘Whether the Embassy has been against the Young Turks I don’t know. Perhaps from old hatred they may have leaned to the ideal of “authority” even in the person of that old wretch. But the F.O. has been for the Young Turks all along, and behaved very well, so far at least as I can judge from the telegrams. I hear that Sir W. Whittall also was good, and gave shelter to Young Turk generals when they were in danger. The Bulgarians have shewn good sense; and the good relations between them and the Armenians and the Young Turks are the best features of the situation.

‘Yours always,
‘(Sgd.) JAMES BRYCE.’

Vigorously applied, the idea might have provided the Turks with the training and equipment necessary to carry on a liberal administration, under which its various races, Turks and non-Turks, could live together under tolerable conditions, and it might also have gained for England the friendship of the Turks at a moment when Germany was temporarily out of favour. Whatever the outcome of such a plan might have been, one can at least hold that a really effective attempt to encourage the young Turks along the path of liberal state-craft ought to have been made by the British Government.

The efforts of the Foreign Office were hesitating and half-hearted. It delayed too long to be able to forestall the efforts of the German Ambassador, Marschall von Bieberstein, who with extraordinary dexterity converted the humiliation of the overthrow of Abdul Hamid, Germany’s protégé, into a restoration of the unique influence which the Germans had hitherto enjoyed. British prestige, paramount at the revolution, was insufficiently backed by the proposal of a bank to be

financed by Sir Ernest Cassel,¹ and by the official visit to London of a delegation from the Turkish Parliament, which included Talaat and Djavid, the two most prominent political leaders of the new Party. Mr. Buxton was treasurer to the official British committee, which with Lord Onslow as chairman, arranged for their reception, and a day was devoted to a visit to his paternal home in Essex. A lunch at the House of Commons and a photograph on the Terrace in the company of Mr. Arthur Balfour were among the incidents of the visit.

These well-intentioned efforts notwithstanding, the Foreign Office did not turn in a whole-hearted way to the Young Turks as the real masters of the country. Diplomacy, no doubt, had to tread warily. Russia, with her eyes on Constantinople, would have been suspicious of Britain's designs, if the British Government had adopted Mr. Buxton's plan of close co-operation such as was indicated in the proposed training of Turkish officers and diplomats in England. British friendship with Russia, regarded as an insurance against Germany, was, in Sir Edward Grey's view, the objective which should overrule all others.

The visit of Mr. Buxton and his colleagues to Constantinople was made at a time when Europe was passing through a grave crisis. The Great Powers suddenly found themselves faced by a trial of strength over the gravest question which had troubled the Chancelleries since the Algeciras Conference, namely, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Francis Joseph of Austria, an act inspired by his too clever minister, Count Aehrenthal.

While the issue of this tremendous diplomatic duel was still in doubt, the local resentments of the countries immediately affected by von Aehrenthal's coup found vent in retaliatory acts and defiance. The Young Turks

¹ See *As we are*, by E. F. Benson.

declared a boycott of Austrian goods, and Serbian opinion clamoured for war, whilst the Serbian Foreign Minister canvassed the statesmen of the Triple Entente in support of a policy of territorial compensation, and autonomy for the annexed provinces.

In Vienna, Mr. Buxton and his companions had been told by the Austrian Foreign Secretary, Count Aehrenthal, that he need not consider England. 'Your Sir Edward Grey wants peace,' he remarked; and when he was warned not to underrate British influence he replied: 'What can England do to us?'

This disturbance was to provide the British visitors with a new experience.

Although their sole purpose was to champion the cause of the oppressed peoples, their activities were for the first time suspected. The Austrians and Germans set up a great clamour in their press, which represented them as agents of the British Government masquerading as idealists and philanthropists in order to obstruct German progress in the Near East.

The travellers were face to face with the growing estrangement between Austria-Hungary and Great Britain—an estrangement which had begun so unexpectedly, earlier in the year, when Sir Edward Grey denounced Austria's agreement with Turkey to build the Sanjak railway, giving Austria an outlet to the sea through Turkish territory.

Grey's changed attitude to Austria was determined partly by his recently-formed friendship with Russia. Europe was dividing itself into two hostile groups and no single question of foreign policy could any longer be treated upon its merits—each became subordinate to the more impelling requirements of high policy. Thus, the Austrians both in their press and Parliament regarded the humanitarian activities of the British visitors as an attempt to gain the sympathies of Turkey for the Entente, and to stiffen Turkish and Serb

opposition to the Austrian coup. Count Aehrenthal himself lent his countenance to these rumours, and Sir Edward Grey felt obliged to inform him that Mr. Buxton had exercised a moderating influence. Nothing, of course, was further from the truth than the absurd charges of the Austrians; wherever they went, the English visitors tried to exercise a calming influence, and to damp down the warlike ardour of the Serbians. The distorted views of the Austrians throw an interesting sidelight on the evil effects of ententes and alliances; a shadow of the coming Anglo-German war was already darkening the Near East horizon.

THE BALKAN WARS

Up to 1911, the section of opinion influenced by the Balkan Committee continued to give qualified support to the Young Turks, although not without grave misgiving. The attitude of the Balkan Committee was approved by the British Ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Gerard Lowther, who wrote to Mr. Buxton privately (17 March, 1911) stating:

‘I think we must be very patient with the Young Turks. We must not expect immediate reform, but I find they resent very much the most friendly criticism or advice, although they would do all they could to conceal from you any resentment. But I fear their protestations of equal treatment for all has so far not gone very much beyond words. But perhaps when it is the Government that governs we may see a change for the better. Most fair-minded Turks must admit that the comments of the Balkan Committee have been characterized by extreme fairness.’

A weighty opinion was that of Mr. R. W. Graves, British Consul-General at Salonica. His intimate knowledge of conditions in Macedonia and in European Turkey was unrivalled. Writing to Mr. Buxton on 9 June 1909, he said: ‘I entirely approve your policy in backing the Young Turks. It seems to me that we should give them every assistance and encouragement

in our power, instead of magnifying all their mistakes and difficulties, damaging their credit by expressions of disbelief in their ultimate success, and waiting to see which way the cat will jump.' Other Englishmen living in Turkey, such as Sir Edwin Pears and Mr. Philip Graves, correspondent of *The Times*, were equally unwilling to advise any other course. Neutral observers and correspondents on the spot hoped that the excesses and irregularities which occurred under the new constitutional government of Turkey would disappear when the Young Turks had had a chance of recovering from their two revolutions. Sir Edwin Pears describes succinctly the attitude of responsible newspaper correspondents when he wrote to Mr. Buxton: 'All things considered I believe the Turkish Government is now doing as well as can be expected, but the condition of the provinces requires much attention, and there is a practical conspiracy on the part of the newspaper correspondents, myself included, and newspapers here, not to let the worst of the position be known.' (15 March 1909). Sir Edward Boyle, an active member of the Balkan Committee, visited Macedonia at this period. Although he found scepticism everywhere among the non-Turk peoples, he saw visible signs of better government in the cultivation of the fields and in the construction of roads and buildings.

Almost from the beginning two tendencies began to manifest themselves in the policy of the Young Turk Committee. Sir Edwin Pears, writing early in 1909, informed Mr. Buxton that since his visit to Constantinople

'there had been a curious development even in the Committee itself. Most of the members call themselves "Nationalists", by which they mean that Turkey must be ruled by the strictly Turkish party to the exclusion of Arabs, Albanians, and even the Christians. Those (among the Committee and outside it) who take a more liberal view are spoken of as "Liberals". Sabaheddin, who was mentioned while you were here as the head of the

decentralization, or as it is now called, the Liberal party, appears a very poor creature and has nobody's confidence. But the more intelligent Turks accept the liberal theory, which is that full representation must be given to Christians, Arabs and Albanians, as well as to Turks strictly so-called. They are, in my opinion, absolutely right and I am strongly of opinion that the Balkan Committee should not only be kept in existence but should watch the development of the Committee of Union and Progress with the object of giving the policy of the country a liberal direction.

'It is significant that the Sheik-ul-Islam resigned and, though pressed very hard, refused to continue his support to the Nationalist policy and party. The extreme Nationalists represent Moslem bigotry in its worst form. The Liberal section is the one deserving of sympathy and guidance. After all, one must not forget facts. The Christian element have always supplied the brain of Turkey and will continue to do so. The Armenians in particular have thrown in their lot heartily with the Young Turks but always with the hope that they would receive fair treatment. Now in the Chamber this day fortnight, as I tell you in confidence, they and the other Christians were simply terrorized into silence and voting. There exists an angry feeling in the community, which is not confined to Christians only, and this makes the situation a dangerous one. In writing to the *Daily News* I do not think it expedient to mention this aspect of the case, but you ought to know it.'

Further evidence of disquiet came from J. D. Bourchier, the Balkan correspondent of *The Times*. This close friend of Mr. Buxton and many members of the Balkan Committee played a far greater role than usually falls to the lot of a newspaper correspondent. He was guide, diplomat and friend of the Balkan peoples in their struggle against the Turks; to Bulgaria, in particular, he was especially devoted, and in later years he gave himself without stint and without limit in an effort to promote its well-being. Riding on horseback, with an ear trumpet always handy—he was very deaf—his faithful Bulgarian man-servant riding close behind,

he was immediately recognized and acclaimed in any part of Bulgaria.

His sympathy with peasants in misfortune carried him to any length of self-sacrifice that the situation required. Mr. Buxton records an occasion when this devotion deeply impressed Mr. Bouchier's companions.

'We had travelled all day,' he wrote, 'and had arrived after dark at the humblest quarters in that state of fatigue in which nothing matters but food, warmth and rest. But refugees had gathered to see Bouchier, and he must see each one, and hear each pitiable tale. Hour after hour he sat on, taking down details from each man in turn, in the light of a tiny lamp, in the neat hand of an ex-Eton master. Supper was announced ready, but not a bite would he touch till his benevolence had finished its work. Here was a famous correspondent of high position, acting more like St. Francis of Assisi.'

He became a legendary figure, and when, after the Great War, back at his post, he died in harness, the Bulgarians gave him the burial of a national hero, and perpetuated his memory in a manner worthy of kings, for they adorned their postage stamps with his image.

Writing from Sofia, in January 1909, Bouchier states:

'Bands are forming in all parts of the country and it looks as though the respite which the people have enjoyed for some months were nearly over. The Greeks have already a large band of 80 Cretans in the Monastir district (this I hear from our Consulate at Salonika), and another large band is forming in Thessaly under my old friend Constantine Manos of Cretan fame. The Bulgarians are divided into three large parties all at war with each other, and a good deal of murdering is going on. How it will all end it is hard to say but the outlook is not promising.'

Writing from Athens six months later, Bouchier complained of the bellicose ardour of the Young Turks, and by the end of the year, began to despair. Writing from Athens in December, he states:

'The Young Turks are not approaching the question of nationalities in the right way and this will prove an insuperable obstacle to the realization of their programme. They must change their policy or they will fail. At present they are imitating their cousins, the Magyars, in their government of Macedonia, trying to Turcize everything and every one. It is too late in the day for such a policy and it is useless to put back the clock.'

When later the Committee of Union and Progress became in name, as well as in fact, the Government of Turkey, the struggle between the two tendencies, Liberal and extreme Nationalist, ended in the triumph of the latter; the Balkan Committee had striven in vain to strengthen the former faction, and began to return to its former role of critic.

A letter from Enver Bey written from the Embassy in Berlin (29 July 1911) illustrates this fact:

'Dear Mr. Buxton,

'I just read in the newspapers the report of the yearly meeting of the Balkan Committee, where different questions were discussed and opinions put forward in favour, as well as against, my Government. We are accused to pretend to "Turkicize" the other races of the Empire. But you yourself, who have travelled in Turkey, know perfectly well that our tendency has always been the realization of progress for all the populations of the Empire without any difference of religion or race. Whilst a part of your colleagues think that the Young Turks are not decided enough in their political enterprises, some others think the contrary, and pretend that the Young Turks go much too far. Considering impartially the actual state of things, you will certainly admit the fact that the Young Turks have been working hard, and that continuing in the same line, the chances increase to realize the reforms that the country requires and bring it up to a high political standing. But I repeat again what I said to you in London, that it is impossible to accomplish in two years a task that can only be done in twenty years. It would certainly not be just and impartial to expect such an impossible thing from us. Please remember me kindly to your mother and father, and

present my greetings to your brother and to the members of the Club that I had the pleasure to meet in London.

‘Yours very sincerely,
(Sgd.) ENVER.’

Talaat Bey, the Minister of the Interior at the Sublime Porte, had written to Mr. Buxton previously in order to avow his intention to apply, as soon as practicable, the new constitutional laws bestowing equality of rights on the various races. Referring to the Adana massacres of Armenians perpetrated by his subordinates in 1910, Talaat wrote to say (20 June 1910):

‘English opinion will be much more favourable when it will be convinced that no effort, possible under our present law system, has been spared to chastize those responsible in the Adana affair. In the course of a few years we hope all our laws will respond to every requirement of the constitutional life, it being necessary until then, however, to abide by the existing regulations. . . .’

A statement ominously vague, which offered little immediate hope for the non-Turk races.

We have seen that the efforts of the Balkan Committee to influence the Young Turks along the path of liberalism were condemned to failure partly by the fact that neither the British Government nor British financial circles were inclined to exert themselves vigorously in order to counteract the ascendancy of Germany. Already in 1910, Djavid, Turkish Minister of Finance, applied successfully to German banking interests for the funds he needed. Writing on 19 November 1910, to Mr. Buxton, he expressed the view:

‘En ce qui concerne l’emprunt récemment conclu avec des Banques Allemandes, je ne vous cacherai pas que le refus qui m’a été fait dans votre pays (pour des raisons politiques que je ne discerne pas bien) de nous apporter votre concours financier, m’a été très sensible.’

He goes on politely:

‘Croyez néanmoins, que cela n’a altéré en rien les sentiments d’amitié que la Jeune Turquie nourrit à l’égard de l’Angleterre. Quant à la question Macédonienne, je puis vous assurer que nous mettons tous nos soins à faire procéder au désarmement avec tout le calme désirable, en évitant, scrupuleusement, les procédés qui pourraient porter atteinte au respect de la propriété et des individus.’

Enver Bey’s sonorous letter and the promises of Talaat and Djavid scarcely veiled their real intentions. The correspondent of *The Times* at Constantinople, Mr. Philip Graves, in a letter to Mr. Buxton had no doubt of the trend of their policy (25 February 1911):

‘What I blame the Turks for is their persistence in attempting the impossible. “Ottomanization” under Turkish auspices is an impossibility. Will 1,000,000 moderately progressive Rumeliotcs and 7 or 8,000,000 backward Anatolians be able to impose their will on the non-Turks? Abdul Hamid, though he appealed not to Turkish national sentiment but to Islam and could thus rope in many Albanians and Kurds and the bulk of the settled Arabs (Yemen excepted owing to the strength of Zaidism, i.e. modified Shiahism—there) to support his policy, failed hopelessly. I object to the Young Turk policy first and foremost because it makes for political disturbance and weakens the Turks.’

The final response of the Committee of Union and Progress to the appeals and warnings of the Balkan Committee was to appoint, in accordance with their suggestion, a Commission consisting of an Englishman, Mr. R. W. Graves, British Consul-General at Salonica, a Frenchman and a Turk, to assist the Turkish Administrators in Macedonia in establishing a better order—all to no purpose, however. For the Italian descent on Tripoli in 1911 put an end to all prospects of reforms, which in any case the Young Turks had shown little evidence of wishing to bring about.

It was a question now of holding the various parts of

the Turkish Empire together at the point of the sword; the Turkish-Italian War offered the Balkan peoples a golden opportunity to strike at their oppressor; Russia induced Serbia and Bulgaria to form an alliance, which Poincaré was to discover to his shocked amazement, during his visit in 1912 to St. Petersburg, to be nothing less than a *convention de guerre*. J. D. Bourchier, *The Times* Balkan correspondent and a member of the Balkan Committee, played a notable part in bringing Greece and Bulgaria together. Some months before the Balkan war broke out, he wrote to Mr. Buxton:

‘The Greco-Bulgarian entente is going on well and offers perhaps the only safeguard against the policy of Ottomanization. . . I had lately long conversations with the Patriarch ¹ and and the Exarch ¹—both are convinced of the necessity for co-operation in order to save the privileges of the subject populations. The Balkan Committee would do well to urge this upon both Greeks and Bulgars.’

The prelude to the Great War was about to be played. Could the conflict be prevented, or at least localized, or would the system of ententes and alliances drag in the Great Powers?

The Balkan war opened with victories by Bulgaria and Serbia which astonished the world. Though unable to prevent the Balkan Allies from throwing themselves upon the Turks, who were driven in a few weeks bag and baggage out of the Peninsula, the Concert, momentarily active, was able to keep the peace between its members. Meanwhile British opinion was almost wholly on the side of the Christian Allies, the British Prime Minister declaring at the Guildhall on November 9th ‘that the Powers would recognize accomplished facts and would not oppose the territorial changes resulting from the victory of the Allies.’

Mr. Buxton and others took part in War-relief activi-

¹ Respectively heads of the Greek and Bulgarian churches.

ties on the Balkan front¹, and subsequently devoted themselves to a campaign in London urging a settlement recognizing, as far as possible, the national claims of the populations—a lasting settlement which would give to Serbia, North-Western Macedonia, to Greece, Southern Macedonia, the Aegean Islands and Thrace, and to Bulgaria, the bulk of Central Macedonia and Monastir. To the Balkan representatives who had assembled in London to agree to a settlement, the Balkan Committee made its plea for a reasonable compromise and mutual loyalty, and M. Venizelos, the chief statesman among the Balkan leaders, conveyed to Mr. Buxton his warm approval:

‘Let me, in the first place, express to your Committee my warm thanks for the successful efforts which they have made to inform the British public of the real scope and meaning of the great struggle undertaken by the Allies, and for the encouragement and advice tendered to them. Nothing is more fervently wished by the people and the Government which I have the honour to represent than the conclusion of a peace on a really durable basis, just and satisfactory to all concerned and devoid of the seeds of future dissensions. To attain so great a blessing it is essential that, as you suggest, a spirit of reasonable compromise should preside over the deliberations of the Allies, and that they should seek in an unprejudiced mind to arrive at an appreciation of each other’s position now and in the immediate future. If, as I fervently hope, the military successes already achieved are to bear permanent fruit, the harmony and cohesion of the alliance must not only continue, but must be rendered even closer and stronger. I unreservedly accept every word you have said against separate negotiations by any member of the League, and I endorse your most judicious statement that “even where the interests of an individual member of the League seem to be specially concerned, all negotiations and all agreements should be made by the Allies in common”. Such a unity of action and a hearty co-operation in sincerity of mind and frankness of purpose has been from the very outset my one desire, my cherished hope,

¹ See Noel Buxton, *With the Bulgarian Staff*.

my most earnest endeavour. I shall not cease to persevere in this honest and straightforward policy, and with your powerful assistance, for which our gratitude is heartfelt; we hope to establish in the east of Europe a peace that will prove permanent and just to all.'

The fears entertained by the Balkan Committee in regard to a failure of a loyal settlement of the claims of the Balkan Allies were only too amply justified by a letter which Mr. Buxton received from J. D. Bourchier. Writing from Sofia (20 April 1913), Bourchier vividly expresses his surprise and disappointment.

'I am horrified', he writes, 'by the state of feeling I find here (Sofia) and at Belgrade. At Belgrade they are more demonstrative—here "still waters run deep". The Servians cynically say they will not keep their treaty with Bulgaria because "the balance of power must be preserved in the Peninsula". The Bulgarians are very indignant and say they will give them "a taste of the bayonet". There is of course an end of all treaties if they are to be broken in this way. The truth is that the Servian officers finding themselves in possession at Monastir, &c., don't see why they should go out, and regard treaties as waste paper. At Belgrade they coolly talk of a Serbo-Greek attack on Bulgaria though, under the treaties of alliance, both Serbia and Greece are bound to Bulgaria for terms of years. I don't think it possible that Venizelos, who is a man of high principle, would give consent to such treachery, but he may soon be turned out by the chauvinists at Athens. The only remedy for the situation is arbitration in some form or other; another campaign would be a scandal and a disgrace.'

Had these high hopes been fulfilled, the Balkan States would have given peace to a distracted region, and formed a strong independent block, which would have neutralized the danger of the German 'drang nach Osten'. Mr. Buxton went so far as to hold that concessions to Germany in Anatolia under such circumstances could have been contemplated with equanimity; and if he was correct in his assumption of the harmless-

ness of an influence insulated by buffer states, the consent of France and Great Britain to the plan would certainly have narrowed the gulf which ominously divided the Great European Powers.

The cup of success was dashed as much by the rivalries of the Balkan Allies, as by the personal ambition of King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, pushed on by Mensdorff,¹ to prevent a settlement. Ferdinand's dream of coronation in Stamboul diverted the Bulgarian Army from its true objective in Macedonia, and thus tempted Serbia and Greece to establish themselves in regions which by common agreement had been assigned to Bulgaria. It was this which, added to the failure of Russia to make good her promise to arbitrate upon the Serbo-Bulgar claims, led to the attack by Bulgaria on her former Allies, and destroyed all hopes of a stable settlement. The Treaty of Bucharest, against which the Balkan Committee campaigned in vain, left the problem of Macedonia unsolved, for it handed over the Bulgarian parts to Serbia and Greece. In a speech in Parliament, Mr. Buxton warned the British Government of the dangers of accepting the Treaty.

'It is only a mockery', wrote J. D. Bouchier to Mr. Buxton from Sofia (7 March 1914), 'to abolish Turkish rule in the Balkans if it is to be succeeded by what is a worse tyranny in many ways—hundreds of refugees are still coming into this country from Macedonia, especially from the portion now governed by the Greeks. That alone is a bad sign, and the fact that the great number of the refugees are women, children and old men speaks for itself—the men have been simply wiped out by order. There are also refugees in smaller numbers from the Rumanian Dobrudja (i.e. the recently acquired territory) where civil rights are refused to the population—I have lately been in Thrace and have seen a number of the refugees, whose tale is a sad one. . . I cannot publish anything. The old "conspiracy of silence" in favour of the Turks is now renewed in favour of

¹ Count Mensdorff, the Austrian statesman.

the Greeks, who seem to have completely captured the principal London papers—even the reviews won't accept anything against them, and Constantine's butcheries have never been revealed.'

It was indeed soon to be manifest that a policy of justice insisted upon at Bucharest would have well served Great Britain and France in August 1914, when a common agreement between the Balkan States might have kept Turkey out of the war.¹

¹ In *Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, Professors Grant and Temperley state (pp. 471, 485-7): 'No single event influenced the outbreak of war in 1914 more than the Balkan War of 1912-13'. . . . 'The overthrow of the Turk caused an immediate danger, for it affected the Balance of Power in the present. Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Rumania were revealed as conquering military states.' . . . 'Serbia had added a million to its population, had erased the humiliations of the Bosnian annexation, and had triumphantly asserted her prestige in an outburst of Pan-Serb and Yugo-Slav enthusiasm.' . . . 'Pan-Serb agitation, which had been at bloodheat in 1908, was at boiling point during 1913 and 1914.' . . . 'The whole educational life of Croatia, Dalmatia and Bosnia was a seething mass of discontent and smothered rebellion, and the students of independent Serbia inflamed the agitation.'

And it was a Bosnian Serb who started the world conflagration on 28 June 1914 when he murdered the heir to the Austrian imperial throne at Sarajevo.

ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS

END OF ISOLATION

THE four years from 1910 to 1914 are for ever marked by the culminating phase of the movement which, beginning in 1904, finally divided Europe into two armed camps, and led fatally to the World War. Though the signs and portents looked ominous to the observant, few people had eyes to see the lowering clouds or ears to hear the rumblings of the gathering storm.

In spite of the intense naval rivalry between Great Britain and Germany, a Continental war was generally dismissed as 'unthinkable', and people's attention was monopolized by the exciting domestic controversies afforded by Mr. Lloyd George's Budget, and the struggle of Commons versus Lords, which provided all the thrills of a test match.

Looking back at this period across the perspective of the World War of 1914-18, one can regard as only obvious and imperative the activities of the few members of Parliament who raised their voices to warn the country of the coming peril. And yet at the time such action to most people appeared far from being obvious or imperative: in those optimistic and prosperous days people did not lend a ready ear to warnings of catastrophe. Grey, Haldane, and Asquith, to whom the likelihood of a war was a constant preoccupation, allowed the country to remain lulled in a false sense of security.

The small group of active M.P.'s who had an inkling of the disturbing truth sought every opportunity to express their views both in the press and Parliament. They held that Sir Edward Grey's methods of carrying

out the Entente with France and Russia must, with the best intentions, progressively worsen relations with Germany, and would, unless modified, inevitably lead to war. If their writings and speeches at this time appear to emphasize the claims of Germany to consideration, it is not because they were not fully aware of the menace of German militarism, but rather because they wanted to remove the menace by a policy of reason and calculation. The following analysis must not be understood as an attempt to minimize the share borne by Germany in bringing about the war, but rather as an attempt to show where the Liberal Government failed, under Sir Edward Grey's guidance, to take more vigorous steps to prevent it.

In order rightly to appraise the conduct of Sir Edward Grey's critics, and that of Mr. Buxton in particular, we should place ourselves in the circumstances of the time, and not abuse the undue advantages which we now possess of being wise after the event, nor transpose to those days as a criterion the new principles of international policy which now serve as a basis of inter-State relations.

There could be no doubt as to the gravity of the problem. Germany, a late comer among the Great Powers, found herself without the Colonial Empire which in the light of the standards of the time was appropriate to her greatness: the other great European Powers were already in possession of most of the territories that could be colonized; the scramble which apportioned Africa and other regions in Asia between them had almost exhausted itself.

There remained chiefly Morocco, which France was securing for herself during the years 1904-11 after she had consulted all the interested Powers except the very country whose goodwill was mostly needed, namely, Germany; while Great Britain obtained, for her part,

a free hand in Egypt by the Anglo-French agreement of 1904, Italy secured, by an earlier secret agreement, French approval to take Tripoli at a suitable opportunity, and Spain in agreement with France obtained her portion of Morocco.

Germany could not acquire her 'place in the sun' without treading on one of her neighbours' toes. In every direction her route seemed to be blocked. In Asia Minor and the Middle East where a decaying Turkey offered opportunities and temptations, Russia lay athwart her path. Frustrated in Manchuria by Japan, Russia saw in her 1908 convention with Britain a means of fulfilling her supreme ambition, namely, the possession of Constantinople and guardianship of the Straits.

Apart from these elements of conflict, largely economic in character, and grave enough to daunt the boldest statesman, the heart of Europe itself was rent by deep racial discords. The future of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—the ally of Germany—was bound up with the aspirations of its Slav populations and made a conflict between Slav and Teuton almost inevitable. Slav peoples again were at grips with their Turkish oppressor in Europe—another of Germany's potential allies. In the west, France nurtured her desire for the recovery of Alsace and Lorraine.

To fulfil these conflicting purposes, each country stood armed to the teeth, and the ever-growing armaments were in themselves a menace and a constant source of fear and suspicion. In this welter of anarchical relations, every great State sought an ally to support and protect it from the aggression of its neighbour, to consolidate its possessions or to make additions to them.

On the Continent the country most feared was Germany, possessing the most powerful land forces that the world has ever known, and already in 1900 embarking on a great fleet; at any moment France and

Russia might be forcibly drawn into her orbit—a phrase which well illustrates the philosophy of the time. Under these conditions, the British Government no longer felt powerful enough to pursue a policy of isolation, which had proved to be painful during the Boer War. Moreover, her need to assure her doubtful legal tenure of Egypt—the fruits of an act of force—compelled her to look for allies. But Britain did not at once turn to France and Russia in order to counter-balance the strength of Germany. It is too often forgotten that to preserve the balance of power was not her first preoccupation at this period.

Certain members of the British Government in 1898–1901 desired an alliance with Germany, and an offer was publicly made by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. An understanding between the greatest naval Power and the greatest land Power would not have constituted a balance of power, but would rather have imposed on Europe an Anglo-Teutonic pax. In the anarchic world of that day, an alliance between the two strongest and most efficient Powers, Great Britain and Germany, would have provided an unparalleled bulwark against war; before such a combination, France and Russia would have been powerless, and the former must have been compelled to modify her alliance with Russia, and pursue a policy of understanding with her neighbour across the Rhine. Inspired by Holstein, the evil genius of the German Foreign Office, the German Government rejected this offer—the first of the many cardinal blunders in foreign policy which Germany was to commit in the next few years. It was this refusal which caused the British Government to revert to the policy of the balance of power and conclude the Entente with France in 1904¹ (and later with Russia), to the painful surprise of the German Foreign Office which never dreamed that England could so readily come to

¹ See Appendix I, p. 173.

terms with her hostile rivals. Thus Germany was destined to be the artificer of her own encirclement.

Diplomacy now required a sudden and complete *volte-face* on the part of the British public; abuse of France vanished magically from the newspapers; King Edward threw himself with enthusiasm into the task of transforming the psychological relationship between the two peoples, and actively supported the policy of Lord Lansdowne, who had concluded the agreement with Delcassé, the French Foreign Secretary. The latter had welcomed the new orientation because it enabled France to entertain hopes of recovering her lost provinces and of acquiring further territory in Africa. No one in Britain seemed to be concerned with the fact that France was already bound by a dangerous military alliance with Russia, whose ambitions could only be satisfied by war. Thus one of the many paths which led straight to the abyss in 1914 was chosen by Lord Lansdowne.

As a means of security the new balance of power offered a poor substitute for an Anglo-German alliance. Within less than twelve months of the conclusion of the Lansdowne-Delcassé agreement, its main provision brought Europe to the brink of war; the French Mission to institute 'reforms' in Fez in 1905, which followed Lansdowne's promise of British diplomatic support for a French free hand in Morocco in return for equivalent support for a British free hand in Egypt, caused Germany to fear that the independence of Morocco was endangered, though guaranteed by the Powers in accordance with the Treaty of Madrid (1880). The action of the French led to the Kaiser's blundering naval visit to Tangier in 1905,—a step forced upon him against his judgement and wishes through a base trick perpetrated by his Chancellor, von Bülow—and this in turn brought King Edward on an official visit to Paris, supported by an exchange of visits between British

and French naval squadrons at Brest and Portsmouth. The resignation of Delcassé for the moment saved Europe from war.

SIR EDWARD GREY AND HIS ADVISERS

Here was warning enough of the dangerous character of Entente and alliances—a grouping, let it never be forgotten, formed at the outset not so much for defence against aggression as for consolidating, and acquiring further colonial gains in Africa and elsewhere—here was warning enough to the Liberal Government, returned by an overwhelming and unprecedented majority in 1906, to pursue a policy of peace.

The country was already committed to participation in the Conference of Algeciras at which Germany was to raise the question of the future status of Morocco. In its proceedings, Sir Edward Grey, who had succeeded Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office, should have read an even graver warning; for did he not see himself obliged by the Lansdowne–Delcassé Agreement to give uncritical and unreserved support to France at every stage? ‘Tell us’, exclaimed King Edward to M. Jules Cambon, ‘what you wish on each point, and we will support you without restriction and reserve.’¹ The Algeciras Conference was a desperate conflict and not a conference, a conflict which ended in a victory for the new Allies. Its conclusion served only to deepen the cleavage between the two groups of Powers. Europe had already begun to organize itself into two armed camps. If Sir Edward Grey could not reverse the wheels immediately on his taking up his post, the events of 1905 and the proceedings at Algeciras gave him ample cause to endeavour to strike out a new path and to play more the part of a mediator, and less the part of an uncritical ally, during his long term of office.

¹ Gooch, *History of Europe*, p. 365.

After the ratification of the Algeciras Treaty, he could at least attempt to undo some of the evil results of this allied victory,¹ and by strictly confining the Entente to the aims of removing points of friction, endeavour to pursue a policy of conciliation with Germany and promote good understanding between the three countries. The alternative policy was to deepen the scope of the Entente, *transform it into a virtual alliance affording mutual military and naval assistance to its signatories*, and strengthen it by the adhesion of allies.

Sir Edward Grey adopted the latter course because he believed that in no other way could Britain maintain a navy vastly superior to a Continental combination, and British interests were bound up with naval preponderance. He failed to see that the more pacific course would have secured for Britain the requisite naval superiority but without at the same time intensifying naval rivalry and widening still further the gulf separating the two groups of European Powers. Harold Nicolson, in his life of Lord Carnock, points out that Grey could have tried to purchase German disarmament by colonial concessions. But he goes on to say that although 'it offered every prospect of success', it would not have been approved by Parliament. The fact is that, on the contrary, a policy of conciliation would have been much to the liking of the Liberal House of Commons of that day, which had been returned on a wave of Radical reaction against the long Conservative régime with a record tarnished by the Boer War. There were far graver obstacles than the supposed unwillingness of the House of Commons. For

¹ The evil effects were far reaching, and created in German minds a fear and suspicion of international conferences: Algeciras has in fact been given by well-known Germans as one of the reasons which in August 1914 led Bethmann-Hollweg to refuse Sir Edward Grey's offer of a general conference.

undoubtedly such a policy could scarcely have been carried out without endangering the existing friendship with France and Russia. These difficulties were indeed formidable, particularly as the newly wedded Allies were not sure of one another, and Germany had so recently rejected a British alliance. Success would depend greatly on the personality and outlook of the British Foreign Secretary. If he brought to his onerous task the broad outlook and trustfulness which were consistent with the Liberal spirit of the time, as exemplified by the South-African settlement; if he could sound a new note in the language of diplomacy, that would inspire confidence not only in France and Russia but in Germany also, he might have instilled new life into the Concert of Europe. The result might be that it would concern itself, henceforth, not merely with some Balkan and Turkish question, but with the main factors which were threatening to disturb the general peace.

Had Grey the virile outlook of a Castlereagh, or the bold energy of a Palmerston, even if he lacked the international sense of a Woodrow Wilson, to which now in his period of retirement he appears richly to give expression, he might have succeeded in breaking out of the cage into which he had been trapped by his predecessor. He followed the line of least resistance and passively embarked on the road already marked out for him by Lord Lansdowne, and his Foreign Office advisers, Sir Eyre Crowe, Sir William Tyrrell and later Sir A. Nicolson. The last-named, an honest representative of the old school of diplomatists, who became the head of the Foreign Office in 1911, was convinced that

‘the German Army, and above all the German Navy, were larger and more fully equipped than was necessary for mere purposes of defence. He believed that there existed a compact minority in Germany (powerful enough to force the hands of the civilians) who desired to use these two mighty engines of

war in order to impose the will of Germany upon other nations. And he felt that since these people believed in force, it was by force alone that they could be restrained. . . . He desired above all that the solidarity of the Entente should be patent and proclaimed. He regarded the existing arrangements with France and Russia as possessing all the disadvantages, and none of the benefits, of an alliance. He thought that the Ententes were sufficiently binding to encourage people in St. Petersburg and Paris, and not sufficiently binding to discourage people in Berlin. He considered that in this vital matter the indolent British indulgence in half measures was not only dangerous but unfair. Unfair to Germany; unfair to France and Russia; unfair above all to British public opinion. He urged Sir Edward Grey, in season and out of season, to make it clear to the world where exactly we stood.¹

Sir Eyre Crowe's views were even more definitely fixed; they were rooted in a deep and ineradicable conviction of Germany's hostility to England. Nothing could shake this belief which Sir Eyre Crowe expressed with increasing vehemence from 1906 onwards, as the *British Documents*² show. It was a belief that the knowledge we now possess proves to have been mistaken. Germany, menacing as her armaments were, had no such consistent purpose, and neither in 1911 at the time of the Agadir crisis nor in 1914 is she shown to be attempting to realize her ambition by aiming at war. Her moves on the European chessboard were not different in kind from those of other Powers. They were all blundering towards the final catastrophe.

Holding such rigid views, neither Sir Eyre Crowe nor Sir A. Nicolson were in a position to attempt a constructive and pacific way out of the vortex of fear and jealous competition into which the Powers had drifted.

'Had Nicolson gone to Berlin in 1908' (as successor to Sir F.

¹ H. Nicolson, *Lord Carnock*, 1930, p. 330.

² *British Documents on the origins of the War*, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley—referred to in subsequent pages as *British Documents*.

Lascelles), writes his son and biographer, 'he would have acquired a deeper and clearer understanding of German policy. So intelligent and fair-minded a man would have seen at once that under all this vaunting violence and vanity of the German Emperor and Empire, there existed a deep layer of pacificism and good sense.'¹

Sir Eyre Crowe's inability to see the situation in a less prejudiced light was possibly due to his half German origin, his mother being German born, and his consequent desire, conscious or unconscious, to stress his loyalty—a loyalty which was never in question—by outdoing the full-blooded Briton in identifying the German people with pan-Germanism.

Not to be affected by these persistent anti-German views, held by the highest officials, would have required in a statesman unusual calibre, a first-hand knowledge of Europe, and something of an international mind. Unfortunately Sir Edward Grey had none of these qualifications. His particular outlook would render him readily susceptible to the imperialistic views of his advisers. He was consciously out of sympathy with the majority of his Party who disliked the aggressive policy represented by the Boer War. So concerned indeed was he to uphold the 'Imperialist' view that he co-operated with Lord Haldane and Mr. Asquith in an attempt to secure for each of them a pivotal place in the Government of 1905, and to transfer Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman to the House of Lords. King Edward consented to be a party to the scheme, but Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, thanks to the spirited support of his wife, put up a successful resistance to his removal.² Lord Haldane asserts in his autobiography, that a 'robust' tone could not otherwise be maintained in the House of Commons. 'For the sake of free trade it was largely expedient', Lord Haldane rather naïvely states, 'that

¹ H. Nicolson, *Lord Carnock*, p. 250.

² See Lord Haldane's *Autobiography*, p. 168.

the Government should be as strongly as possible permeated by the spirit of Imperialism.'

Again, Sir Edward Grey's ignorance of Germany and of foreign countries in general caused him to lean heavily on the officials and to share their defects, notably their disastrous inability to appreciate the constitutional and peace forces in Germany. Lord Haldane does not hesitate to witness at the close of his life to the severe handicaps under which Sir Edward Grey and his advisers worked, owing to their want of real knowledge of Germany. In his autobiography he states that:

'Grey was hampered by the want of knowledge of the source of German mentality. He knew little of the history or literature, or of the spirit of that difficult mentality. This would have mattered less had the majority of the advisers, on whom Grey had to rely, known more, but they were mainly anti-German in their tendencies. No doubt the German Ambassador was himself purely responsible for this, and the apparent determination of Germany to create a great Fleet helped. But we Ministers would have been very potent in coping with the situation had we had wide knowledge about it and of the history and tradition that had produced it. Whether Disraeli knew much of that tradition and history, I do not know—I doubt it. But he had a keen imagination and something of what has been called an international mind, and this was valuable in the crisis with which he had to deal.

'Grey was splendidly conscientious and just, but he seemed to doubt whether the Germans were genuinely good people,¹ and they, of course, knew that he doubted it. Consequently, mainly over trifling events, the situation between the two peoples became a difficult one. I did what I believed I could to help in his attitude towards Germany, but Grey was in spirit a pure Briton and I was a good deal less so, and, consequently, I could not prevail with him against the tendencies of his Ambassadors and of his advisers in London.'

¹ In a message to Mr. McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Edward Grey, referring to the Germans, said: 'We are dealing with a people who recognize no law except that of force' (July 24, 1911. *British Documents*, vol. vii, p. 625).

In these circumstances Grey could not otherwise act than to develop and strengthen the dangerous policy of opposing Ententes to alliances, of answering menace with menace, and of seeking a fresh ally in Russia—a policy which to the English was known as ‘insurance’, and to the Germans as ‘encirclement’.

He was afraid frankly to voice his views in Parliament, and to ask its authority for concluding an alliance with France, as he was urged to do by Sir A. Nicolson: he knew that Parliament would have rejected such a course and would demand a pacific policy, which he felt himself incapable of executing and in which he disbelieved as being dangerous: he therefore, as is now well known, as early as 1906, secretly authorized, on his own authority and without the knowledge of most of the members of the Cabinet, what was euphemistically called ‘conversations’ between the French and British military authorities; these were military arrangements which provided for the despatch to the Continent of a British Expeditionary Force to assist France if attacked by Germany; the plan was worked out and completed to the last detail by the end of 1910.¹

Sir Edward Grey’s view of this arrangement was curious. He believed that it left Britain’s hands free. His belief was based on the condition that the military machinery could not be set in motion without the consent of the British Parliament. To this condition the French—well pleased with the arrangement—must have attached little importance. It set up merely a nominal check. When Parliament at the moment of danger would be apprised of the fact that for years the two Governments had conducted their national policies behind the cover of these secret arrangements, it would be in honour bound to give its consent to the operation of the machinery. In 1912 the arrangements were further advanced when it was secretly agreed by the

¹ See pp. 175 et seq.

two Governments that the French fleet should henceforth concentrate in the Mediterranean. The northern coasts of France were left to the protection of the British fleet, which in turn concentrated in the North Sea.

Mr. Churchill clearly realized what was implied. 'My anxiety', he writes (*The World Crisis* 1911-14), 'was aroused to try to prevent the necessary recall of our ships from tying us up too tightly with France and depriving us of that liberty of choice on which our power to stop a war might well depend.' He communicated this anxiety to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, but not apparently to the Cabinet, and this perhaps may explain why the Cabinet did not appreciate the full significance of the Grey-Cambon letters exchanged in 1912¹ which gave the French, short of the open alliance, all that they desired.

'In eliciting this document from the Cabinet' wrote Nicolson in his *Life of Lord Carnock*, 'M. Cambon had obtained something beyond his most optimistic expectations. It seems almost incredible that the British Government did not realize how far they were pledged.'

Earl Loreburn in his masterly study, *How the War Came*, states that these letters 'put the seal of honour on an unrecorded duty. They took the place as regards

¹ The relevant passage reads:

'If either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common.'

'If these measures involved action, the plans of the General Staff would at once be taken into consideration and the Government would then decide what effects should be given to them.'

These were not divulged to Parliament until 3 August 1914, and even then the last paragraph was not read by Sir E. Grey. Inadvertence is alleged, but the fact remains that the omitted clause was a vital one, revealing the existence of agreed military plans of which the House of Commons had been kept in ignorance (see Appendix II).

all policy of the 1904 Treaty, which had promised only diplomatic intervention in regard to policy in Morocco.' Later he says that 'by 1913 our Entente with France had become such that, to use Mr. Lloyd George's phrase, we were under an obligation of honour to join her in arms, if attacked' by Germany without giving provocation. (p. 217).

Parliament knew nothing of these secret arrangements, but Members guessed that a virtual alliance was in being; it was obvious that at every crisis, the Algeciras Conference, 1906, the Casablanca affair, 1908, and Agadir, 1911, the British Government conceived its duty to be to solve the disputes by backing France at all costs, even if it meant war. These crises presented so many tugs of war, which Grey felt he must utilize to strengthen the Entente. The post-war publications, memoirs, and Foreign Office telegrams amply bear out this reading, which several members of Parliament, including Mr. Buxton, ventured to make in Parliament in 1911-12.

AGADIR

The culminating crisis in Anglo-German relations was the storm which arose when, in consequence of the French march on Fez, the Germans sent a warship to Agadir in July, 1911.

The circumstances of the crisis are now known, and they can briefly be given. To understand its underlying significance, one should recall that the question of colonial concessions had reached its most acute stage: the German Foreign Secretary was attempting to make a deal over the French Congo with Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador in Berlin: neither party would give way, and tried to end the deadlock by attempting to forestall a decision with a *fait accompli*.

The French, tired of the limits laid upon their Morocco aspirations by the Algeciras Act, marched on

Fez, under the pretext that the Sultan's régime was menaced by lawless forces. The *Journal des Débats*—not a paper conspicuous for moderate views—frankly warned the French Government against pursuing a 'policy of disguised conquest', while Jaurès fulminated against the French Colonial Party, who were thus bringing the country into grave danger. History was repeating itself with remarkable rapidity. In 1905, the French Envoy's visit to Fez with a mission to institute 'reforms'—a first step in the establishment of a Protectorate—led to the Kaiser's ill-mannered protest at Tangier against a policy which left Germany out of account. The march on Fez in 1911, in defiance of the Treaty of Algeciras which expressly aimed at preserving the international status of Morocco, was to lead to an equivalent step from Germany with even graver results. But before the Germans sent the destroyer *Panther* to Agadir in July, Sir Edward Grey could have intervened to restrain the French. He did not effectively attempt it;¹ once the march was embarked upon, Sir Edward Grey felt himself obliged to give full diplomatic support to his ally. He told the German Ambassador that it 'was not only the right but the duty of France to succour the Europeans, and French intervention would be of benefit to the world'.

On the other hand, Sir Edward condemned in forcible terms the sending of the *Panther* to Agadir as an 'unprovoked attack on the *status quo*'. Foolish the action certainly was, but it was far less a violation of the Act of Algeciras than the French occupation of Fez, which he approved publicly. Germany excused her action for reasons precisely similar to those used by France—her nationals needed protection. Her real object, of course, was to strengthen her bargaining power in the negotiations with France in regard to colonial territory. Had

¹ See p. 65 for the views of the British Ambassador at Madrid, Sir Maurice de Bunsen, on the conduct of the Foreign Office.

England and France been formally bound by a treaty of alliance, Sir Edward Grey could not have done more: he was backing his ally in any and all circumstances. His intimate colleague, Lord Haldane, was fully prepared for war:

‘if the country decided on such a step. . . . I was in a position to mobilize the Expeditionary Force and to send it straight off to the Continent. In order to be quite ready, I stopped the manœuvres that were customary at this time of year, alleging the intense drought which prevailed as a reason. The money so saved was spent in completing mobilization arrangements. I was well aware that Germans would find this out and I thought it better to be open with them, *though no announcement was made of what was being done at home*. I told their military attaché, Major Ostertag, that the General Staff were bound to make preparations for eventualities.’¹

In Volume VII of the *British Documents*, it is revealed that Sir Edward Grey also seemed to be prepared to fight, if the Franco-German negotiations came to a deadlock, and if Germany refused a Conference:

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie, Paris, September 8, 1911:

It is essential that before war comes (if it does come) it should be clear that Germany has meant war and has forced it; unless that is so, I could not be sure of what the course of public opinion here would be, and if the Government has to take a decision for war, it must have the strongest possible case to put before Parliament.

With this object, I stipulated that a Conference should be

¹ Lord Haldane, *Autobiography*, pp. 224-5. Writer's italics.

The crisis revealed the fact that the Naval Authorities did not approve the War Office plan which was to be used in the event of a war with Germany. Lord Haldane states, ‘They (the Naval Authorities) wanted to take detachments of the Expeditionary Force and to land them at points on the Baltic coast on the northern shores of Prussia’, but they were to be overruled.

Russia, on the other hand, informed France that she was not prepared to make war over a strip of African territory and ironically conveyed her views in the very terms with which France had refused to promise help over the Bosnian crisis in 1908.

proposed if the negotiations between France and Germany come to a deadlock. If Germany accepts, war is one remove further off; if she refuses, she appears as the person who prefers war.

Immediately after the *Panther* had anchored at Agadir, the French Ambassador and the German Foreign Secretary resumed the negotiations they had been conducting for months respecting the distribution of colonies in Africa. These conversations badly rattled the Foreign Office. Sir Edward Grey's chief advisers were haunted by the fear that the French might be induced to consent to a partition of Morocco. London was far more upset than Paris; would the Germans secure a naval base at Agadir?

For the moment, Sir Edward Grey appeared to be less alarmed than his officials. A remarkable article, published by Professor Mowat in the *Contemporary Review*, June 1932, describing the gist of Volume VII of the *British Documents*, well indicates the position:

'Sir Edward Grey seems not to have been averse even to Germany obtaining a commercial port on the Atlantic coast of Morocco; Sir Arthur Wilson, First Sea Lord, when consulted by Grey, "regarded it with equanimity"' (*British Documents*, vol. vii No. 375, p. 358). But Sir Eyre Crowe, whose anti-German minutes became stronger and stronger, would have none of it. 'Germany may now be counted upon to continue her well-tried policy of blackmailing. For the present, France is the victim. . . . Nothing will stop this process except a firm resolve, and the strength to refuse and, if necessary, to fight over it' (July 12, 1911, p. 349). A week later he is minuting: 'Germany is playing for the highest stakes. If her demands are acceded to either on the Congo or in Morocco, or—what she will, I believe, try for—in both regions, it will mean definitely the subjection of France. . . . This is a trial of strength, if anything. Concession means not loss of interests or loss of prestige. It means defeat, with all its inevitable consequences. . . . Therefore it will be of little use for His Majesty's Government to consider in detail the particular conditions which might or

might not be put up with, before deciding the larger and dominant question whether England is prepared to fight by France, if necessary' (p. 372).

'Will any person now', asks Professor Mowat, 'in the light of the experience of the last fifteen years, hold that the issue at stake in 1911 at Agadir would really have been worth a world war? Crowe and some other civilians apparently thought so. . . . Which was the better judge—Crowe or Admiral Wilson? Anyhow, Crowe's view won.'

Professor Mowat shows that Sir Edward Grey was at first only half persuaded: he felt that neither Morocco nor a slice of the French Congo was worth a world war. He wrote to Sir Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador at Paris, to the effect that the German desire for something was not wholly unreasonable. 'Nevertheless, *next day*' as Professor Mowat states, 'the war challenge of Great Britain to Germany goes forth.'

The circumstances of the challenge were amazing. The Admiralty was calm. The French 'were behaving with complete sangfroid.' Grey had stated to the German Ambassador on July 4 that the British Government could not be disinterested in regard to Morocco. 'The statement', declares Professor Mowat, 'did not call for any answer: it was just a declaration of policy. It could not even be formally acknowledged by the German Government, for Grey appears to have sent no Note, but passed on the statement in his conversation with Metternich.'

If a reply was required, it could have been obtained by a diplomatic Note. On July 21, 'while the resources of diplomacy had still hardly been tapped', Lloyd George, with the approval of Grey and Asquith, without first consulting the Cabinet, delivered his inflammatory Mansion House speech:

'Britain should at all hazard maintain her place and her prestige amongst the Great Powers of the world. If a situation

were to be forced on us, in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievements, by allowing Britain to be treated as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of Nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure.'

Dr. Gooch may here be quoted: ¹

'The Foreign Secretary, who must bear the chief responsibility for the decision, seems to have been unaware that he was launching a high explosive. It was precisely the same claim to be considered that the Kaiser had championed at Tangier, and it provoked the same explosion in Germany as the Tangier declaration had provoked in England. The German people saw France and Germany engaged in discussing the Morocco question, and no French statesman had raised the alarm. Suddenly a contingent declaration of war seemed to be flung across the North Sea. It was regarded as convincing evidence that Great Britain was as eager to thwart the colonial and commercial ambitions of Germany as she was to encourage those of France.'

Germany was not bargaining for any partition of Morocco, as Crowe thought, but for the French Congo or a portion of it; Britain's appearance 'in shining armour' by the side of her ally eventually secured a triumph for France in the negotiations, she rounded off her African Empire with the acquisition of Morocco. The effect in Germany was deplorable. 'We know now' declared Heydebrand, the Conservative leader, 'when we wish to expand, when we wish to have our place in the sun, who it is that lays claim to world-wide domination. It has been like a flash in the night. We shall secure peace, not by concessions, but with the German sword.'²

In France, the effect of the speech was equally deplorable. The French Ambassador in Berlin, Jules

¹ Dr. G. P. Gooch, *History of Europe*, 1878-1919, p. 483.

² *Ibid.*, p. 484.

Cambon, was 'rather aghast at the effect which Mr. Lloyd George's speech has had on the French Colonial chauvinists' (*British Documents*, vol. vii, p. 413).

Where was Britain's restraining hand?

Grey had always held in the House of Commons that France's association with Britain was a guarantee that she would not pursue a provocative policy. This plain narrative shows that on occasion the Entente had exactly the opposite effect; provocative acts from France called for provocative acts from Germany in reprisal, ending in provocative acts by Britain, Russia looking on and waiting her turn to strike. How vain the Foreign Office policy of security was already proving.

Members of Parliament were not told that Lord Haldane had mobilized the army. They were unaware that General Sir Henry Wilson had gone post haste to France to concert with the French High Command in preparing the final arrangements for the despatch of the British Expeditionary Force.¹ They knew nothing of the orders 'which were immediately given to secure the British fleet against surprise attacks'.² Mr. Winston Churchill admits that 'Parliament, unaware of the facts, would instantly have repudiated the views' upon which

¹ See Appendix II, pp. 175 et seq.

² Winston Churchill, *World Crisis: The Eastern Front*, p. 47.

The tension continued well into September, as is shown in the following message from Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson, Sept. 17, 1911: 'The negotiations with Germany may at any moment take an unfavourable turn and if they do so the Germans may act very quickly—even suddenly.'

'The Admiralty should remain prepared for this. Our Fleet should therefore always be in such a condition and position that they would welcome a German attack. We should of course give the Admiralty news immediately of any unfavourable turn in the Franco-German negotiations, but German action might follow so soon after this that there would not be time to get our ships together, if they were not already in positions whence this could be done quickly' (*British Documents*, vol. vii, p. 638).

these actions were based. They suspected, however, that the country had suddenly been brought to the verge of war.

ACTIVITIES IN AND OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT

At the height of the crisis, Members were obliged to be silent, although they had a splendid opportunity of uttering their views, as July 27 had been set aside, some weeks previously, for a Foreign Office debate. They confined themselves to Persian affairs. A discussion of the pleasures of pack riding in Persia would have been more entertaining, if equally irrelevant. The fact remained that Parliament made no attempt immediately to disavow Lloyd George's speech, or to counteract some of its evil effects. This silence in the face of a threat of war reflects no credit on those Liberals who could read the sign of the times.

During the recess, Mr. Buxton and another Liberal M.P., Mr. Howard Whitehouse, seized the first opportunity of studying the situation on the spot and proceeded to Berlin. Their fear that Lloyd George's speech had been a disastrous blunder was confirmed by what they learned there from the British Ambassador, and from those Germans who had led the movement for better relations. Sir E. Goschen exclaimed to Mr. Buxton in despair 'it has undone all our work'.

While the Anglo-German advocates in England, as Buxton wrote in the *Contemporary Review*, had been silenced and distressed by the Agadir incident, they had not been despairing, but the corresponding Committee with whom they were allied in Berlin, reported 'a sweeping and disastrous change of opinion'; meetings which had been projected for the autumn were now not only regarded as dangerously unpopular, but were not even desired by the main body of leading Anglo-phils. 'Their feeling towards England was one of

despair at what seemed to them the evidence of deliberate unfriendliness'.

The deep offence given to Germany by the Lloyd George speech had not been adequately realized in England, but it was too apparent in Berlin. Nothing could express more vividly the German's feeling of exclusion from 'a place in the sun' than the shop-window displays of maps depicting the minuteness of the German overseas possessions and the vastness of our own. These displays revealed the exasperated determination of Teutons to win what seemed to them elementary justice.

On his return to England, Mr. Buxton threw himself into the movement which aimed at diminishing the ill-feeling and misunderstanding between the two countries. One of his first acts was to present a Memorial to the Prime Minister, for which he had secured the signatures of many M.P.s. It read:

'We, the undersigned, viewing the anxiety felt in this country on account of the recent imminence of war, and in view of the conclusion of the Moroccan negotiations, desire to urge on H.M. Government the importance of taking action:

- (1) To remove the mischievous impression now prevailing in Germany as to the attitude of this country towards her;
- (2) To reassure the German Government and people that no responsible body in the United Kingdom wishes to deny to Germany her share in the settlement of great international questions, or to view with hostility her legitimate aspirations as a great Power.

We share the hope that every opportunity of co-operation with Germany will be taken, that all appearance of a desire to isolate her will be removed, and that the Anglo-French *entente*, which permits, as Sir Edward Grey has said, of friendship with other Powers, will not be allowed to stand in the way of a cordial rapprochement with Germany.'

The Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, was not much impressed by it. He remarked: 'Are there any Conservatives among the signatures?' To this the reply

was made 'Only Bentinck', (Lord Henry Bentinck)—an incident which shows very clearly how the robust representatives of the Liberal Imperialist School—Grey, Haldane and Asquith—felt able to ignore the more progressive and pacific wing of the party.

Parliament was given its first opportunity of discussing the Agadir crisis in November of the same year, five months after the event. On that occasion, Sir E. Grey's critics gave full vent to their fears. In this and the very few succeeding debates which the Government permitted, Mr. Buxton for his part frankly analysed the dangers of the Entente, notably in July 1912 when Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Dillon, and Mr. Keir Hardie made powerful criticisms of Sir E. Grey's policy.

Mr. Buxton's intervention in the Agadir debate showed that he looked with favour upon the Anglo-French Entente in so far as it promoted friendly relations between the two peoples, and eliminated differences between the two Governments. Indeed, the majority of the public could think only of this aspect of the understanding, few people were aware that there was another side of the picture.

The actions of the Government during the Agadir crisis convinced him that the nature of the Entente with France precluded an understanding with Germany, and that, in substance, it bound England to aid France in the event of war with Germany. He tried vainly to draw Sir E. Grey into revealing the position when he flatly declared that, though the Liberal Government was not responsible for the Anglo-French Agreement (concluded by Lord Lansdowne in 1904), it was responsible 'for the subsequent interpretation of it, by which we felt bound to aid France by physical force'.

The Entente, Mr. Buxton maintained, was being conducted as if it were in effect an exclusive alliance

with a 'point' against Germany. This aspect was reflected in a hundred different ways: 'not only in definite acts, but in the nuances of diplomatic negotiations.' Chief among the definite acts he specified Sir E. Grey's support of the French march on Fez¹ which constituted a violation of the Treaty of Algeciras. 'Our policy on that occasion might also be described' Mr. Buxton declared in the House of Commons (July 1912) as 'the French right or wrong'. The Germans had an excellent case, but in sending the *Panther* to Agadir they stupidly threw away all their good cards. Mr. Buxton believed that 'these shock tactics' were the inevitable though tactless reply of a country which felt itself shut out by an exclusive agreement. 'The Entente had the character of a bargain between two boys to exclude the third boy from the cake (Morocco). If the German methods have been risky in consequence, are the Germans to blame or are we?'

Nothing proves more conclusively the justness of the view of the group, namely that Grey's conception of the Entente precluded friendship with Germany, than an important message from Grey to Sir E. Goschen, our Ambassador at Berlin, which is now revealed in the *British Documents*. This message clearly defines Grey's attitude, is more categorical than any statement which he ventured to make in the House, and shows that the position was hopeless.

'I cannot enter into any agreement with Germany', he wrote to Sir E. Goschen, May 5 1910, 'which would prevent me from giving to France or Russia, should Germany take up towards either an aggressive attitude such as she took up towards France about Morocco, the same sort of support as I gave to France at the time of the Algeciras Conference and afterwards until she settled her difficulty with Germany. Any agreement which prevented the giving of such support would obviously forfeit the friendship of France and Russia, and this is what makes me

¹ See p. 51.

apprehensive of trouble in finding a political formula' (*British Documents*, vol. vi, p. 479).

The kind of support which Britain gave France at Algenciras was that of an uncritical ally. Sir A. Nicolson, the British representative, on one occasion flatly declared to the German representative at the Conference that 'he was not in a position to give his French colleague advice, although he was always ready to accord him support'.

The Germans were at the time under no illusions with regard to the position. Sir E. Goschen was reminded again and again by the German Secretary of State, or by the Chancellor, of the exclusive character of the Entente, when he attempted to put relations on a better footing.

Reviewing at the end of 1910 the development of Anglo-German relations, Bethmann-Hollweg complained to Sir E. Goschen that 'as in Algenciras British policy gave its unrestricted support to France in her efforts to acquire the economic monopoly of Morocco, so it is now trying, in collaboration with Russia, to place obstacles in the way of all German economic activity in Persia also.'¹

As to the 'nuances in diplomatic negotiations' to which Mr. Buxton referred, this was plainly felt by the Germans at the time. Referring to the attitude of British diplomats abroad, Bethmann-Hollweg said to Sir E. Goschen: 'In the place of a former confidential co-operation with their German colleagues, a certain reserve has crept in, together with the attempt to emphasize the greater intimacy of English policy with other Powers.'

Looking at the effect on French politics, Mr. Buxton saw that the Entente often in fact encouraged chauvinistic ambitions in France, and as often failed to exercise the moderating influence which Sir E. Grey attributed to it.

¹ *British Documents*, vol. vi, p. 573.

'Our condonation of the seamy side of French operations in Morocco', Mr. Buxton wrote in the *Contemporary Review* in 1912, 'is a natural cause of German suspicion. The Entente should be a union for purposes strictly limited. There are aspects of French activity with which we are markedly unsympathetic—the sphere, for instance, of Colonial finance, revenge for 1870, and of monopolisation of Colonial trade. . . *If our duty to France requires us to support activities over which we have no control*, and which may lead us to the brink of hostilities, it becomes a question whether the statesmen of fifteen years ago were not wise in decrying all connection with European alliances, and in taking all the risks which isolation involved.'

This was a question indeed to which, in 1932, an affirmative answer can well be given, when we contemplate the condition of victorious Britain, strained to an almost mortal exhaustion.

Great attention was being paid by the jingo press in England to the wild talk of the Pan-German nationalists. But the same press ignored the jingoism which was evident in Paris.

'There are many utterances', declared Mr. Buxton in the House of Commons, 'such that if they came from a German source would cause us great alarm, and would certainly afford great satisfaction to writers in the "National Review" and people of that sort. An instance of this tone in the French Press lately occurred in the "Nouvelle Revue", one of the most prominent Paris journals, in January last, as follows:

'We intend to have war. After forty years of a heavily armed peace, we can at last utter this opinion, without the serious readers of a French review shaking in their shoes. . . France is ready to strike and to conquer as she was not ready forty years ago, and she will not be in four or five years to come, owing to the annual divergent numbers of the birth-rate in each country. . . We, the attacking party, will have arranged with England that their fleet . . . will have followed . . . the remains of the whole German Navy into German waters.'

'These things are treated with far too much attention, but we must treat them with the same judgment whether they are in

Germany or in France. If such things are being said in France and only commented on by us when similar utterances occur in Germany, they are worth noting, because they indicate that the view we take of the Anglo-French entente is not always exactly consonant with the opinion held in France.'

The fact that wild statements made by Frenchmen were discounted by responsible people in England, though similar statements made by Germans were magnified out of all proportion, pointed to a very deplorable symptom of the disease affecting Anglo-German relations. It was indeed far worse than was imagined. The sixth volume of *British Documents* describes the work of the Foreign Office from 1907-12, and one of its most surprising revelations is the extraordinary importance attached by Sir E. Crowe and other high officials of the Foreign Office to any hostile or unsympathetic articles in the German press, whilst at every opportunity they minimized the value of friendly approaches.

Nothing provides more distressing reading than Sir E. Crowe's minutes or comments on the despatches either of Sir F. Lascelles, Ambassador at Berlin until 1908, or of Sir E. Goschen, his successor. Numberless examples could be cited which show that Sir E. Crowe would admit nothing good of the Germans, and placed little reliance on evidence tending to prove that large sections of the people desired peace. He almost always attributed an ulterior design to any supposed change for the better in the German attitude. For instance, on the occasion of the increase in the naval estimates authorized by the British Parliament in 1909, Sir E. Goschen, the British Ambassador at Berlin, after surveying the German press, concludes: 'Generally speaking, there has up to now been a singular absence of bitterness in the tone of German criticism on the British naval debates, and the possibility and even necessity of some kind of an understanding with England

is undoubtedly, as may be seen from the Press utterances, beginning to take root in Germany.'

Thereupon Sir Eyre Crowe comments:

'It would be most unfortunate if this idea should gain ground here and be subsequently found to be erroneous. I would therefore sound a note of warning against accepting Sir E. Goschen's statement as any indication that the German Government are likely to make an agreement or come to some understanding on terms really satisfactory to the country respecting a limitation of armaments.'

On another occasion, Sir E. Goschen draws attention to an earnest article in the *Berliner Tageblatt* appealing for an 'Anglo-German Insurance Treaty against untoward events', in the shape of an obligatory Treaty of Arbitration.

Sir E. Crowe expresses irritated impatience:

'It is difficult to take seriously a political writer who calls upon England and Germany to ensure peace by signing an obligatory arbitration treaty, in evident ignorance that such a treaty already exists.'

A public servant with leanings towards a conciliatory policy would have reacted very differently. He would have said: 'The Government should give publicity to the existing treaty, and so place public opinion in both countries behind it.'

A staff swayed by such marked tendencies¹ was obviously incapable of reading critically despatches from Sir Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador in Paris. Bertie saw Europe through French windows. He is gratefully described by a French historian as having, '*à titre personnelle*,' warned the French Government, after the failure of the Haldane mission to Berlin,

¹ See also p. 53, where Crowe desires to make Morocco a *casus belli*.

Again, when the fatal crisis came in 1914, Crowe advised Grey, as early as 25 July, against holding Russia in check. See *British Documents*, vol. xi, p. 81.

against any renewal of the 'diplomatic offensive' which the Germans would, he felt, undoubtedly attempt; this warning led to the exchange of the Grey-Cambon letters, which effectually bound England to go to war.¹

It is not surprising that, during the Agadir crisis, the Foreign Office officials lost their heads, and encouraged the Government to take a course, the result of which was, as we have seen, to give a new impetus to the war party in Germany, and bring about a large increase in the German naval armaments.

The crisis of Agadir was a test of which they fell short. They were unable to make a calm and balanced survey of the position, but crudely added fuel to the fire of rivalry and hatred which the Yellow Press of the two countries were so zealously keeping alight. The alarm felt by the Foreign Office seemed, indeed, to go to absurd lengths. Mr. Buxton's notes contains a record of a conversation with Sir W. Tyrrell in November, 1917, in which Mr. Buxton raises the question whether a different attitude on our part in the Agadir crisis might have avoided War; the following answer is recorded—'Germany would have got across our African railway: South Africa would have gone; France would have been neutral; Russia and Germany would have swallowed China.'

British Ambassadors accredited to neutral countries, breathing a calm air, were amazed at the crudeness displayed by the Foreign Office during the Agadir affair. Sir Maurice de Bunsen, writing to Mr. Buxton on 3 December 1911 from Madrid, where he was British Ambassador, shows what a more efficient staff would have done:

'We, too, might have done more than we did in the way of confidential conversations in London and Berlin. I should have

¹ See Hauser, *Histoire Diplomatique de l'Europe*, 1929, vol. ii, p. 282.

liked to say to Germany the day after Agadir: "We quite understand that a readjustment of the Algeciras Act, to meet the new conditions created by France, has become necessary. You need not have called attention to this necessity so forcibly—for it is obvious. The French march on Fez—which we don't presume to blame, as perhaps it was necessary—has of course profoundly altered the status quo. Nothing of the kind was contemplated at Algeciras, and you are quite within your rights in pointing this out, and in asking France either to revert to the Algeciras arrangements or to give you territorial compensation. If it is to be in Morocco, you will, we are sure, admit that to ensure a satisfactory settlement we [England] should be consulted as to the details; if elsewhere, we do not want to interfere but trust to you not to tread on our toes."

'Our attitude was not quite as above. Indeed, when I returned on leave early in June, the disposition at F.O. seemed to me to be directed towards throwing the whole blame of Agadir on the Spaniards—as if their occupation of Alcazar and Larache had not been the direct consequence of the occupation of Fez by the French. F.O. did not ~~see~~ (I thought) clearly enough that the French, once in Fez, would never be able to get away, and that their action was at the bottom of all the subsequent trouble. In fact, the F.O. attitude amounted to a declaration that France could do no wrong.'

'Now this is not the attitude of moderate thinking Frenchmen, and my friend the French Ambassador here—M. Geoffray—has, in all his frequent conversations with me, criticised his own government much more severely than the F.O. did, and never ceased to point out at Paris that, if the French Colonial Party was allowed to get the upper hand [as indeed happened] there must be trouble.

'As a matter of fact, we *did* try to stop the French, half way to Fez—but failed—and then backed them up through thick and thin.

'It is difficult to say all in a letter—and even this I only write to you feeling sure it will go no further.¹ On the whole, I think Grey acted for the best, and the faults are mostly on the side of Germany, who might so easily have explained from the first that she had no intention of remaining at Agadir.

¹ Consent for publication obtained, 1931.

‘Living here in Spain, where the French advance was viewed with intense suspicion and dislike, I could not help seeing—before I think it was seen at home—that the Algeciras settlement was hopelessly breaking down, and that it was useless to go on keeping up the diplomatic fiction that France was only advancing in order to save life and restore the independence of the Sultan. By advancing they only rivetted the chains already long since encircling the Sultan’s neck. The F.O., however, was very reluctant to abandon this favourite theory of the “Temps”. Then Germany rudely tore it to shreds.

‘If really, as you say, the country desires a more friendly attitude to be adopted towards Germany, the desired object will be attainable in time. The press is often a great obstacle. You and your friends are doing meanwhile all that is possible. Perhaps after the German elections there may be a change for the better in Germany.’

It was indeed time for some protest to be made in the House of Commons. The plea that officials must usually not be criticized may be a sound rule; but if their power is such that relations with foreign countries for good or ill are practically determined by them, nothing could be more grotesque than for the House of Commons to allow itself to be muzzled on such a ground. Mr. Buxton felt that criticism in the circumstances was justifiable.

Speaking on the need of establishing better relations with Germany, he declared:¹

‘I would speak freely, and say that for a Liberal Foreign Secretary the task is always one of extraordinary difficulty. His instruments are not always sympathetic, and he must exert himself very powerfully to overcome the natural impression which is given, and which certainly has been given in past years, in a sense quite unsympathetic with Liberal policy by the diplomatic representatives abroad. The Foreign Secretary would certainly wish to hold himself responsible for all the impressions, right or wrong, that his representatives abroad have given. Undoubtedly there has been given in Europe by our

¹ 27 November, 1911. House of Commons.

diplomatic representatives the impression that there is grave distrust of Germany and a positive bias by many of them and some of them the most important. . . .’

PROMOTING BETTER RELATIONS WITH GERMANY

To counteract the ill feeling and to check the growing misunderstanding between the two peoples, Members of Parliament urged that the Government should encourage frequent contacts between German and English associations, and exchange of visits between ministers. In the House of Commons, Mr. Buxton suggested that the Foreign Secretary should visit Germany on an official mission. This would probably have been more valuable than the Haldane mission of a year later, as Sir Edward Grey greatly needed to gain first-hand knowledge of Germany and of the German people. Such a method has nothing novel in it to-day, but it is interesting to note that in proposing it in 1911 Mr. Buxton felt obliged to refer to precedents, such as were provided by ‘the visit of Lord Beaconsfield to Berlin’, or ‘the Mission of the Duke of Wellington to St. Petersburg in 1827’. He also urged that a special invitation should be extended to the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, to come to London, so as to expedite the conclusion of an agreement between the two countries. How invaluable such an exchange of visits would have been is shown by Mr. J. A. Spender in his book *Life Politics and Journalism*, published in 1927, in which he describes an interesting conversation at Potsdam with the Kaiser. Seated on an enormous horse, the Kaiser complained bitterly that Englishmen did not come to Berlin. ‘Go back and tell them to come, tell your Government people to come; tell Sir Edward Grey to come.’ Mr. Spender felt that ‘this Emperor on the high horse was clearly a very human kind of human being. He evidently had a grievance.

It was just as if a newcomer was complaining that the county did not call on him. It was incredible to us that the great German Empire, by far the strongest thing in Europe, thought itself slighted and side-tracked. But so it was.'

The group's advocacy at this time of closer contacts could not, therefore, have been more pertinent. Mr. Buxton contended in the House that there was a case for definite propaganda, a word which in those days had not acquired the sinister associations of to-day.

Foreign Secretaries, he argued, should regard as their special duty the task of creating good understanding between peoples; they should foster interest in current problems and take the public into their confidence. He eulogized the Labour Party—the new world represented in the House—which had set itself the task of promoting peace education. Unless they were to rely entirely on physical force, they could not ignore the imperative need for this kind of effort. In particular, it was the immediate duty of the British Foreign Secretary to dispel current misconceptions in Germany respecting the attitude of the British people. Sir E. Grey should interpret the opinion of the British public and show that it entertained a keen appreciation for all genuine progress in any nation, especially that one which was perhaps of all others most akin to themselves.

The diplomatic service was failing to fulfil its function. It was finding itself unable to grapple with the forces which were threatening the peace of Europe. He argued that diplomacy with its old and rigid tradition, and its exclusive personnel, was falling short of its task; it despised the lubricant which its machinery badly required—namely, the pacifying influence of public opinion.

'We all know that public opinion, if it had had its way in time past, would have saved us very great blunders. For instance, it

would undoubtedly have saved us from the Crimean War. We are dealing to-day with hard facts. We are dealing with Estimates, and we are asked this year to spend no less a sum than £628,000 upon these negotiations between States quite apart from any war expenditure. Sir Robert Peel, in his last speech in the Debate in 1850, said: "Diplomacy is a costly engine for maintaining peace and a remarkable instrument used by civilised nations for the purpose of preventing war. Unless it be used to appease the angry passions of individual men, and I am not using a precedent of a party character but one that would be recognised by all classes, unless it is used to check feeling which arises out of national resentment it is an instrument not only costly but mischievous".'

'Foreign Ministers', Buxton wrote in 1912, 'would be taking a longer view if they supplied their diplomatic instruments with a background of that international common sense which is not confused with the immediate difficulties of negotiation, but represents the view that the mass of the people are in bondage to armaments and are determined that, come what may, a quarrel they will not have.'

Here lay the defects of the diplomatic methods of the time; the normal machinery of diplomacy not only failed to ensure good relations between Germany and Britain but became too often the channel of suspicion and fear, and it acted without a check—the check of an informed public opinion zealous for good understanding and the check of personal intercourse between Foreign Ministers.

Such views, which to-day are accepted common-places, were regarded as positively dangerous by the Foreign Office.

'The Anglo-German Friendship Society',¹ wrote Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Charles Hardinge, his successor at St. Petersburg, 'of which Lascelles, I believe, is Chairman, has induced the Lord Mayor to convene a meeting at the Guildhall on May the 1st in favour of an understanding, and I daresay the visit here of the

¹ Mr. Buxton was an active member of the Committee along with Lord Weardale.

German Emperor next month will encourage all those who consider that the true way to salvation for us lies in our marching hand in hand with Germany. I think that this is unfortunate as it is impossible to convince the adherents to this policy that Germany does not admit friendship on equal terms and that we should find ourselves before long compelled to act in accordance with German wishes in every question which might arise. On the other hand it is, of course, impossible for us to take up an attitude adverse to friendly understanding, as we should be immediately accused of placing obstacles in the way of what these good people consider to be one of the strongest guarantees of peace.¹

A year later, Sir A. Nicolson speaks in the same strain to M. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador (15 April 1912):

‘Of late there had been a very active propaganda by financiers, pacifists, faddists, and others in favour of close relations with Germany, and this propaganda had made considerable headway.’

He, accordingly, advised M. Cambon not to press his proposal for the conclusion of a definite alliance with France. It would be best to ‘leave matters as they are’, and not ‘to strain an understanding already popular’.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) minutes the memorandum with the words: ‘I entirely approve the language used by Sir Arthur Nicolson.’

To such a pass had the system of alliances and ententes brought its sponsors that the permanent head of the Foreign Office actually regarded the promotion of friendship with Germany as a calamity.

As for the so-called faddists, the most active of whom included Sir F. Lascelles, until 1908 the distinguished British Ambassador at Berlin, the effect of their activities was to force Sir A. Nicolson and the Prime Minister to adopt an attitude of conscious deception. As public opinion evidently would not tolerate an alliance, the

¹ Sir A. Nicolson to Sir C. Hardinge, 19 April 1911, *British Documents*, vol. vi, p. 62.

naval and military 'conversations' between France and Britain were to continue in the dark secrecy with which they had been begun.

GERMANY'S LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS

If between the British and German peoples mutual understanding and feelings of friendship had been established, the concrete questions which tended to separate them could have been more easily solved. To a friendly rival one can give concessions without loss of prestige, and the removal of fear brushes away a host of bristling difficulties. The so-called realists, who treat the psychological factor as of secondary importance, are probably wrong in their diagnosis of the primary causes of international quarrels.

We have seen earlier how in the summer of 1911 Germany's efforts to acquire Colonial concessions reached a climax. For several months the French Ambassador at Berlin, Jules Cambon, and the German Foreign Secretary, Kiderlen-Wächter, had been engaged in secret negotiations, that often rose to dangerous moments of tension. The French march on Fez and the German demonstration at Agadir showed that neither of the parties was in a mood to attain agreement by diplomatic means alone. As we have seen, Mr. Lloyd George's 'contingent declaration of war' left Germany with a dangerous grievance and a pretext to arm. If the Government retraced its steps in time, and showed a willingness to consider Germany's aspirations, the harm might be undone. Believing this, Mr. Buxton flatly and plainly insisted, both in the Press and Parliament, on the need of a policy which would meet the just claims of Germany in regard to colonial territory—claims which, as Mr. Buxton pointed out, Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, had characterized as 'legitimate aspirations'.

Mr. Buxton never ceased urging this policy of satisfying Germany's colonial aspirations. He felt that this was one of the most hopeful means of avoiding war. In an interview in the *Daily Chronicle* November 1912, he refers to the subject.

'Many people in this country' said Mr. Buxton, 'think that the whole responsibility for the growth in armaments lies with Germany. No doubt the idea has been fomented in Germany that the powerful British Fleet is a menace to the growing overseas commerce of Germany, and this has had its influence in encouraging German naval ambitions. In fact, the two influences act and react. Everybody in England knows that we do not meditate any attack on Germany, but German papers find plenty of nasty and nagging English utterances to quote, while English friendly papers say little on foreign affairs. Why, then, should the pernicious efforts of a small minority poison relations between two peoples who have so much in common, and who spring from the same stock ?

'I am not a blind Germanophile,' said Mr. Buxton, 'but there is an Englishism as well as a Prussianism which does not always appear in a favourable light to the foreigner. I want to insist on the fact that there is no essential conflict of interest between the Germans and ourselves. Nowhere is there any conflict over territory, and the commercial rivalry over the railways in Asia Minor and Turkey is not in the least insoluble. There is ample room in the world for the commercial ambitions of both people. In Asia Minor itself and in other parts of the Turkish Empire, there is plenty of scope for commercial enterprise, and the Turks are really anxious to grant commercial concessions with the object of developing the economic resources of their Empire. Asia Minor and Macedonia, which used to be the granaries of the Roman Empire, offer a virgin field for exploitation.

In the *Contemporary Review*, January 1912, he was more explicit.

'What interest has England (apart from strategy) in opposing the creation of German colonies in Morocco, Turkey, or other conceivable quarters not occupied by Great Powers? She has

no intention to form such colonies herself. Her object is commercial, and dictates no more than the demand for the open door. That granted, the development of any country which provides a market and a source of raw material is to her advantage. The idea of hampering the formation of German colonies, where they do not threaten us strategically, is commercially unsound. On the question of the Open Door, it may properly be asked, what have been the services of France in that direction? . . .

‘England has no settlement or colonies which could conceivably become German, or obey any authority but their own. She has no other colonies that she will part with, nor has France. It is therefore a problem for the world to satisfy the just demands of the great new Power. Happily this need not be done by taking land from others now in possession. The unoccupied quarters of the world afford, happily, an opportunity, among which it is to be regretted that Morocco has not been included. It is absurd for Englishmen to condemn colonial ambition itself—that very spirit the glory of which has been discovered by the countrymen of Mr. Kipling. To hem Germany in, if she wants colonies, is worthy neither of British fair play nor of practical expediency. With regard to Morocco, the danger clearly arises from the fact that our minds were not made up. The Colonial question, both strategic and economic, must be faced.’

This view found support in unexpected quarters. Admiral Sir George King-Hall, Commander-in-chief of the British Fleet in Australian waters, wrote privately from Hobart, Tasmania.

‘I was delighted at reading your article in the *Contemporary* on England and Germany. I have always felt it a thousand pities we do not recognise that Germany must have some outlet for her expanding population. We always seem to be blocking her way. I had hoped she would have found this outlet in Morocco; and as for making Agadir a Gibraltar, it is absurd. She would have found her hands full in Morocco, and her only means of sending troops there, via Dover Straits, always at our mercy if necessary to act. It would be much better for both countries if we pulled together, and if Great Britain gave a helping hand to Germany in her natural ambition to have some

country in the temperate region where her people could live and flourish. I know Germany, and feel we are playing a dangerous game in tying ourselves through thick and thin with a country like France, who to my mind is most deserving of censure for the way she has faced the Morocco question. As a naval officer I know no politics, but I thought you would like to know that I, and I am sure thousands of other Liberals, agree with your remarks, and long to be on better terms with Germany. They have a perfect right to build a fleet. The only thing we can do is to take care ours is strong enough to protect our Empire and enormous trade. It is troublesome to us and very expensive, but this cannot be helped. There is no use snarling and grumbling—it only leads to bad blood. We must hope that Germany will see in time the uselessness of spending such enormous sums on her navy.'

A satisfactory settlement of the Colonial question would diminish the acute naval rivalry which was the determining factor in the estrangement of the two countries. Mr. Buxton expressed his views on one occasion in criticism of a provocative speech by Mr. Winston Churchill, who argued that a stiff and unbending policy paid best. Mr. Buxton vigorously attacked this view in the *Nation*:

'If we had smoothed the way to a larger compensation in the French Congo' he wrote, 'and less actively backed the French colonial party's view, would the recent amendment of the German Navy Law have been greater? To justify the high-handed policy, such an assertion is necessary. In this view, our consent to German acquisitions, from the days of Angra Pequena to Agadir, is considered to have been a mistake which has only led to increased fleets. In other words, if we had denied to Germany all access to any colonial field whatever, German officials would have been more modest and chastened than they are.

'Such a contention is obviously absurd. But if so, it is not a high-handed policy which will pay in the future, but one that recognises the claim of Germany, not, indeed, to superior rights to ourselves in any special unoccupied field, but (in a larger view

of justice among the Great Powers) to the first consideration in regard to the spheres of colonial development which are unallotted or may be purchased.

‘It is, at least, incumbent on Mr. Churchill and Sir Edward Grey to give some reason for their belief that greater safety and economy is to be expected on the lines they are pursuing. Let it be repeated that, given the policy, many of us regard the naval provision as appropriate, and therefore do not vote against it; but we protest, none the less, against the policy behind it.

‘Not as naval administrator, but as the mouthpiece and coadjutor of the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Churchill’s policy causes a chill in his party. It is widely disapproved of, as he well knows, even by naval officers who may profit by it, on the ground that it is a departure both from diplomatic tradition and from commonsense.’

Mr. Arthur Ponsonby in the House of Commons (10 July 1912) made an equally vigorous attack against what he called ‘the new voice of diplomacy, using the annual naval statement as a means of speaking to Europe, as a method of suggesting alliances and more especially as a means of cautioning, warning, and even threatening foreign countries.’ He concluded his speech with a remarkable plea—remarkable for its originality in those days—addressed to the British Government to convene a European conference for the limitation of expenditure on armaments. ‘The Hague Conference’ he declared, ‘is going to meet in two years time, but it is usually occupied with all sorts of technical points of international law. I should like a Conference on this particular point alone.’

With such views as these the Foreign Office felt no sympathy whatever. In 1912, Lord Haldane’s mission to Berlin brought the Government face to face with the question once again, namely, whether it was worth while purchasing some sort of naval agreement with the grant of colonial concessions. Sir Eyre Crowe’s opinion was indistinguishable from that of the extreme reactionary section which Mr. Buxton had attacked.

‘I do not see how this German policy (i.e. of domination on land and sea) could be deflected by concessions on our part, territorial or otherwise. These might cause a lull, but they would never conquer the storm. Good relations with Germany,’ Crowe concludes, characteristically, ‘are to be had by any Power with which she is afraid to go to war, and by no other.’¹

Here is revealed a characteristic miscalculation on the part of the Foreign Office heads of that time. Even if we assume that Germany was as aggressive as Sir Eyre Crowe believed her to be, to produce a lull before the storm would have been of incalculable value. Time was a factor favourable to the Entente: the constitutional and democratic forces in Germany were rapidly gaining ground year by year, and sooner or later would attain power; but these were the very forces to which Sir Eyre Crowe and his staff persistently turned a blind and scornful eye.² Mr. Buxton was fully alive to the dangers arising from the absence of Parliamentary control in Germany. What he looked for, as did Lord Haldane, was the gradual rise of the parties of the Left, whose victory was only a question of time. If war could be avoided over a period, the danger from autocracy would disappear. ‘A war postponed may be a war prevented,’ writes Mr. Churchill in *World Crisis, The Eastern Front*, ‘time and peace solve many problems and men’s thoughts move on to new spheres.’

THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

The efforts made by Members of Parliament to bring about an improvement in Anglo-German relations led them to appreciate the grave defects of the British

¹ *British Documents*, vol. vi, p. 703, 3 March 1912.

² Earl Loreburn, in his study, *How the War Came*, quotes the views of Lord Milner and Mr. Gerard, American Ambassador in Berlin, who held that the German people were rapidly preparing to revolt against the Junker and the Jackboot (pp. 281-5).

Diplomatic Service. Mr. Buxton had much to say on the subject. He deplored its recruitment from an exclusive class, which could not readily sympathize with progressive movements.

‘The upper class, which has long lost its administrative domination over home government, retains it in foreign affairs. Till recent times, the admixture of Liberalism in this class, and the partial control exercised by Parliament, removed the practical objection to class domination. But both these factors have disappeared. While the upper class has become more entirely Conservative, Parliamentary control, weakened under Lord Salisbury, was not revived even after the Liberal victory of 1906, because political energy was absorbed in domestic politics. Thus at the very moment when international forces are becoming more democratic, progressive, and pacific, the inspiration of our diplomacy tends to grow more discordant with the public opinion it should represent.

‘There are backward countries where European advisers are brought in to supply knowledge and skill. In two of these I have heard the comparative merits of English and other officials keenly discussed, and not with advantage to the Briton . . . I have heard it argued by a very clever Mohammedan who had studied at Cambridge, that in what foreigners call “snobbism” the Englishman attained a degree of sublimity which he had not detected in France or Germany. He said that in the lecture class to which he belonged there was one student, and one alone, of ability and interest; but in social circles, though he met all the dull ones, he never met the clever one. The explanation which he received, namely, that the clever man was not a “gentleman”, he had never been able to understand. This was a sample of the phenomena which made him for all practical purposes anti-English. He is a Turk, wielding almost unique influence at a moment when the friendship of Turkey is not a *quantité négligeable*.

‘Further steps can obviously be taken to make the instrument less absolutely out of sympathy with a Liberal Government than at present it is bound to be. The Foreign Office suffers, not only from the natural infirmities of all officialism, but from the abnormal misfortune of being practically free from criticism. . .

'The Foreign Office suffered not only from a class bias but from a lack of a first-hand knowledge of foreign peoples, and often failed to profit by the advice of its ambassadors on the spot.'

'It is notorious that Foreign Office opinion is out of touch even with the opinions of diplomacy. An ambassador once remarked to Lord Salisbury: "For the first time in my experience you are doing what we ambassadors approve." The Foreign Secretary replied: "Then there certainly must be something wrong with the policy". The retort was not merely a good specimen of Lord Salisbury's ironical humour; it indicates what is at all events of great interest to the public—that when a policy has been pursued which brought us close to a great war, it was probably not supported by the chief diplomats on active service'. . .¹

Later he proceeds to indicate the remedy:

'A still more important question is that of amalgamating the Foreign Office and diplomatic services. An exclusively Foreign Office training provides only a paper knowledge of foreign countries. The diplomat, on the other hand, loses touch with English life and thought. One result of the system is the complete dependence of the foreign on the home branch, and the consequent lack of solidarity. And further, anything which increases the efficiency of the missions abroad brings them into closer touch with the public of those countries to which they are in theory accredited. Amalgamation should be complete.

'Again, in other States, the diplomatic and consular services are frequently interchanged. Our own tradition is far more aristocratic. The promotion from the consular to the diplomatic corps is so rare that the cases of Sir William White and Sir Ernest Satow are conspicuous, indeed almost unique. The United States, in their Consular "Inspection" Service, have an institution which maintains the tone of the consular corps, and provides a stepping-stone to diplomacy. In Italy, the Foreign Office is largely manned by consuls.'

Some of the defects which were here indicated still

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, November 1912. See pp. 63-4 for confirmation of this criticism.

hamper the efficiency of the diplomatic service, notably its rigid separation from the Consular service.

To-day, even in remote and half-civilized countries, the relations between the British Embassy and the British Consular Staff are often on a purely business footing. Socially, the Minister and his staff often tend to hold themselves aloof from Englishmen who, though well educated and courteous in manner, are not able to speak with the accents of Eton or Winchester.

Sir Arthur Nicolson, who became head of the Foreign Office in 1910, failed to profit by the initiative of his predecessor, Lord Hardinge, and missed a great opportunity in not pushing forward this reform. It is remarkable that, although two Labour Foreign Secretaries have since directed policy, no attempt has been made to effect the much-needed change.

Like the State Department at Washington, the Foreign Office is beginning to appreciate the value of enabling its clerks to gain first-hand knowledge of their subject by service abroad. But until there has been a complete merging of the Consular, Diplomatic, and Foreign Office staff, we cannot look for a thoroughly effective service.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEES

At this period the question of Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committees was first raised in the House. Members had been roused by the Agadir crisis to consider ways and means of effecting some sort of control, however slight, over the policy which Grey, Asquith, and Haldane were developing in secret. Parliament, they felt, was clearly out of touch with the foreign policy of the Government. Ministers contemptuously ignored the views of the ordinary members and provided very few opportunities for debate. Even

during the debate on the Agadir events, it was clear that Sir E. Grey shrank from dealing with the principles of his policy or of discussing Anglo-German relations in general. He confined himself to a concrete narrative of his conduct during the Agadir episode.

The group felt that some means of effecting Parliamentary control was imperatively necessary. They urged, Mr. Buxton and Mr. Ponsonby in particular, the establishment of both official and unofficial Foreign Affairs Committees. Official committees would have involved a change in the constitution of Parliament, and added to our institutions something analogous to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Chamber. No attempt was made to give it serious consideration. Unofficial Party Committees could, however, be immediately set up if the members so desired, and would serve a useful purpose.

In 1912, Mr. Buxton and Mr. Arthur Ponsonby (now Lord Ponsonby), decided accordingly to organize a Foreign Affairs Group of the Liberal Party. Apart from the general need of effective contact with the Foreign Secretary's policy, the aims of the group were devoted specially to improving Anglo-German relations. The following statement, circulated at the time, clearly expresses its purpose.

'A group has been formed to organize opinion on Foreign questions representing the whole Liberal Party. The idea is prevalent that Parliament has abrogated its function in regard to foreign things and that this is not in accord with the doctrine of democracy; and that therefore Liberals should reflect the vastly increased interest expressed by the public and the newspapers of all parties. It is felt that whatever the function of Parliament may be, the nature of this function should at least be considered.

'The movement is not an attempt to get diplomatic negotiations made public, and it has no united opinion in regard to naval estimates. On the other hand, it is a protest against the

obscurantist doctrine of diplomacy. The Conservative Party in particular has protested against the change encouraged during the last few years, and against the concealment from the public of the general outlines of our foreign policy and the grounds for the new theory of continental entanglement. *Liberals feel that this is based on an assumption of the desires and powers of a single continental State which cannot be substantiated; and it is felt that the policy is virtually dictated by a very small number of permanent men at the Foreign Office, who are often out of touch, not only with public opinion here, but with the opinion of our own diplomatists abroad.*¹ It is obvious that a Liberal Government has a difficulty in carrying out its views, and that the friction with Germany has been partly due to the private opinions of some of our diplomatists. This may be partly balanced by the expression of views in Parliament.

‘In this country Parliament has none of the control exercised even in autocratic States by official Foreign Affairs Committees. Therefore all the more need exists for some organization of Parliamentary opinion. This applies to policy, as, for instance, in regard to Germany and Persia, but also to the question of system, as, for example, the plutocratic qualification for posts in the foreign service and the relations of the diplomatic and consular services.

‘With regard to Parliament it is felt that there should be more discussion, no discouragement of questions, and fewer appeals for silence. Sir Edward Grey has expressed his readiness for further debates when a desire is indicated; it is for party groups to give such indication.

‘The Committee is keeping in touch with Members of the Cabinet.’

Over seventy members consented to join the Group; the formation of which was strongly approved by Lord Morley. They elected Mr. Buxton as their first Chairman, and their earliest statements of policy gave promise of a vigorous attitude, as is indicated by their first resolution.

‘This meeting of the Liberal Foreign Affairs Group views with great concern the relations with Great Britain and

¹ *Writer's italics*, a well-founded assertion.

Germany, regards with disapproval any policy which might seek to oppose the legitimate aspirations of Germany, and urges on H.M. Government the necessity of taking definite action with a view to reaching an understanding.'

An Executive Committee was set up and groups were formed with special responsibility for studying particular questions—two members undertaking in each case the problems of Anglo-German relations, Persia, Russia, the Near East, the Far East, the Congo, and Arbitration. Meetings continued at frequent intervals, Mr. Philip Morrell succeeding to the Chairmanship in 1913, and Mr. Ponsonby in 1914, when the outbreak of war brought the organization to an end.

A perusal of the *British Documents*, published in 1930 and in 1932, covering the period 1907-12, strongly justifies these abortive attempts to control policy affecting the lives of the people. Any one comparing the preoccupations of the Foreign Office during this period with those of the House of Commons will be struck with the utter and complete divorce of their relations. The Foreign Office was pervaded by a persistent, and an ever-increasing fear of a conflict with Germany; every week the possibility was discussed or envisaged, and arrangements were made to prepare for war.¹ Apart from Sir Edward Grey, and his intimate colleagues, no member of Parliament had any conception that relations were so chronically bad. After showing alarm at times of crises, members always relapsed into a placid calm, and remained blissfully ignorant of the fact that only the obvious symptom had for the moment disappeared. That the fire was spreading ever more rapidly beneath the surface was known only to the Foreign Office, and the misguided views and the unfortunate methods of the few permanent men who dictated policy had the effect of piling faggots on the flames.

The informal Committee failed in their purpose for

¹ See Appendix pp. 175 et seq.

want of this knowledge. Few of the members exerted themselves with sufficient vigour. They were in general too easily satisfied and lulled into tranquillity by the soothing speeches of the Foreign Secretary, and by the misleading assurances of the Prime Minister.¹

CONCLUSION

Reviewing the efforts of the peace party, we have reluctantly to note that they had little or no effect upon the Government. They served merely to drive underground the Entente policy of the Government. This was maintained secretly and in full vigour and left no room for these proposals, the adoption of which would have led to a way out of the impasse, such as a bold change in our attitude towards German colonial aspirations. The Government refused to be influenced by its Radical supporters. It was far more impressed by the whole-hearted support accorded to its policy by the Conservatives, and Sir E. Grey and Mr. Asquith felt themselves accordingly to be on safe ground. Count Metternich, the German Ambassador, had himself observed the divergence of party feeling on the question. In one of his telegrams to the Wilhelmstrasse he described how, during the debates on the Agadir episode, the Conservative Opposition invariably applauded any reference made by His Majesty's Ministers to the strengthening of the Entente, and he noted the invariable cheers of the Liberals when desires were expressed for a *rapprochement* with Germany.

On other grounds also the Government was able to ignore the attitude of its supporters. The criticism of the latter was neither sustained and constant, nor whole-hearted and vigorous. Mr. Buxton and those Liberal members of Parliament, who were filled with forebodings of a coming war with Germany, greatly

¹ See Appendix pp. 177 et seq.

erred in not coming out into the open, addressing themselves to the people, and conducting a widespread campaign of protest and alarm throughout the land. But most of the Radical members of the party refrained even in the House from making frontal attacks against the Foreign Secretary. They all, without exception, felt embarrassed by the prestige of which the Foreign Secretary seemed to have far more than his share. Their criticism, with few exceptions, was qualified and not sufficiently direct and unequivocal to impress the popular mind, an element of uncertainty pervaded their speeches, they evidently felt impotent in the face of the anarchical forces which were sweeping Europe to the abyss. Were the critics prepared to work for a policy of isolation? They seemed to shrink from this means of avoiding entanglements; they feared to think out its implications. The prospect of German hegemony on the continent would no doubt have proved less of a bogey if Germany had not built a powerful fleet. Were they prepared to terminate the Entente? No, the Entente must continue in some form, but modified. But how modified? They failed to direct their attack on the earliest and most dangerous point in Grey's policy, namely, the Russian partnership. The more obvious objections were not the most decisive, such as the incongruity of allying democratic England with a cruel autocracy, or the destruction of the independence of Persia. Members wasted far too much time on these topics, and based few or none of their arguments on the relevant and most menacing factor, namely, the threatening conflict between Slav and Teuton. War between France and Germany, or Germany and Britain, was certainly not inevitable, but a conflict between Russia and Austria-Hungary seemed as certain as any predictable event upon which the human mind has ever reckoned. Threatened by internal dissension from its Slav subjects and from outside by

the rapacious and warlike Serbs, Imperial Austria would one day engage in a struggle to the death with its neighbour, and Russia would take the field in support of its Slav protégé. As soon as Russia was sure of Britain's support, she would not hesitate to strike. Some wretched Balkan misdeed was bound in such circumstances sooner or later to set Europe ablaze. An odder conception of security was never conceived than to involve Britain, through the Triple Entente, in an inevitable racial struggle between the unruly Serb and the Teuton. Through the fatal network of the Entente, Britain was finally trapped by this issue, the irrelevance of which stands out with all the more tragic clearness when we recall that the prospects of an Anglo-German understanding steadily improved from 1913, and by July 1914 agreements already initialled had removed several important disputes between the two countries.

The Concert had frequently been invoked by Sir E. Grey's critics as a means of maintaining good administration in European Turkey. None among these critics spoke of the Concert as a means of modifying the system of ententes or alliances, or constantly urged the holding of conferences between the chief Powers of the opposing groups.

The close Entente between France and Britain had accentuated the difference between each of these countries and Germany: to allay them, now France, now Britain, attempted singly to negotiate with Germany, an attempt which invariably aroused the suspicions of the partner who happened at the moment to be absent from the discussions. When Kiderlen-Wächter and Jules Cambon were engaged in 1911 in eliminating their differences, Sir E. Grey was alarmed lest this should be done at the expense of British interests, and he encouraged Mr. Lloyd George to make his inflammatory speech at the Mansion House. When again, in 1912, Lord Haldane attempted to bring about

a *rapprochement* with Germany, M. Poincaré countered the move by tying Britain's hands with the Grey-Cambon letters. If the statesmen had been wiser, they would have insisted on a tripartite Conference of the three western countries. Sir E. Grey's critics failed to direct attention to such a policy. The Parliamentary Labour Party showed neither skill nor sustained and informed interest, and it was inevitable that, owing to the consequent lack of drive among the Liberals and Labourites, their plan for attempting to exercise some sort of control, however small, over the general conduct of foreign policy should have come to nought.

It should, however, never be forgotten that the main factor contributing to the weakness of Sir E. Grey's critics was beyond their control and lessens the force of the foregoing strictures, namely, that the Foreign Secretary, though acting with the best intentions, had successfully kept from the knowledge of the nation and Parliament from 1906 until the very day before the declaration of war the existence of the agreements with the French military and naval staffs, which effectively bound Britain to come to the support of France if she found herself at war with Germany—a concealment which deprived the country and Parliament of the liberty freely to decide issues of the most momentous character in its history, touching the very lives of the people and the entire destiny of the State.¹

¹ See Appendix pp. 175 et seq.

WAR DIPLOMACY IN THE BALKANS

AUGUST, 1914

DURING the first weeks of the World War, the British Cabinet found itself frequently discussing the position of Bulgaria; the entry of Turkey on the side of the Central Powers was feared; and the neutrality of Bulgaria obviously became of paramount importance. Furthermore if Bulgaria could be induced to join the Allies, Turkey's effort would be checkmated and the war considerably shortened. Mr. Buxton's name was under discussion; his influence with Bulgarians, it was thought, indicated him as a valuable emissary.

A proposal to extend the area of the war was, of course, viewed by him with the gravest deliberation, and his diary records the reflection to which he was led.

'It is horrible to urge a people to war, but it would be in Bulgaria's interest to do so, this being the best (and probably the last) opportunity of recovering her rights. This war offers what has never been possible before and could not be gained without the curtailment of Austria-Hungary, namely, a final and permanent solution of the Balkan question. Also, the entry of Bulgaria would have the most marked effect in shortening the war.'

Two men of action in the Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill, wished to entrust Mr. Buxton with an official mission. The Chancellor wished to authorize him to negotiate loans on behalf of the British Government and wrote a letter, whose profound importance is evident,¹ but Sir E. Grey would not agree to its use.

¹ My dear Buxton,

Any Balkan State that decides to throw in its lot with the Triple Entente in this struggle may depend upon the support of British credit in raising the necessary funds to equip and maintain its army. I

The Foreign Secretary preferred that Mr. Buxton should go in a private capacity (but with the task of reporting to Sir E. Grey through the ciphers of our Legations), and make the utmost use of his personal influence over the Bulgarian people—his work in previous years as President of the Balkan Committee had gained for him a unique place in their affections.

Mr. Churchill also wrote a letter¹ whose influence

authorize you to make such arrangements on my behalf as you may deem desirable to guarantee British financial assistance under these conditions.

Ever sincerely,
(Sgd.) D. LLOYD GEORGE.

1

Admiralty,
Whitehall,
August 31st, 1914.

My dear Buxton,

It is of the utmost importance to the future prosperity of the Balkan States that they should act together. This is the hour when the metal can be cast into the mould. It is only by reclaiming from Austria territories which belong naturally to the Balkan races that the means can be provided to satisfy the legitimate needs and aspirations of all the Balkan States. Without taking Austrian territory, there is no way by which any Balkan State can expand except by internecine war. But the application of the principle of nationality to the Southern Provinces of Austria will produce results so advantageous to the Balkan States that the memory and the consequences of former quarrels could be assuaged for ever.

The creation of a Balkan Confederation comprising Bulgaria, Servia, Roumania, Montenegro, and Greece, strong enough to play an effective part in the destinies of Europe, must be the common dream of all their peoples. The result of this war is not doubtful. Sooner or later, Germany will be starved and beaten. Austria will be resolved into its component parts. England has always won in the end; and Russia is unconquerable. England has been the friend of every Christian State in the Balkans during all their years of struggle and suffering. She has no interests of her own to seek in the Balkan Peninsula. But with her wealth and power she will promote and aid every step which is taken to build up a strong union of the Christian peoples, like that which triumphed in the first Balkan War. By acting together in unity and good faith the Balkan States can now play a decisive part, and gain

would have been vital. Sir E. Grey again exercised his veto, but Mr. Churchill gave a semi-official character to the mission by sending a cruiser to convey Mr. Buxton to the Balkans.

Although Turkey's sympathy with Germany was well known, Sir E. Grey, as we gather from his memoirs, was still hopeful of keeping her neutral, and with this object had refused M. Venizelos' offer of entering the war in the middle of August—a refusal for which Grey was greatly criticized. To gain Bulgaria's adhesion, it would be necessary to offer at least a very large part of the territory which she had lost to Greece and Serbia under the Treaty of Bucharest,¹ and while Turkey remained neutral, it would be impossible to offer Greece compensation elsewhere for such a rearrangement. The attitude of France and Russia had also to be considered. Grey no doubt felt that to decide on a policy without a preliminary exploration would be dangerous, and Mr. Buxton's visit would be of great value in gaining first-hand information on which a decision could be taken.

A special visit was imperatively needed, as the British Minister at Sofia was most unsuited to the post. He was intensely disliked by all sections in Sofia, by both Government and Opposition parties, because of his pro-Serbian views, which he made no attempt to conceal. From the beginning, he led the Foreign Office

advantages which may never again be offered. By disunion they will simply condemn themselves to tear each other's throats without profit or reward, and left to themselves will play an utterly futile part in the destinies of the world.

I want you to make your friends in Greece and in Bulgaria realize the brilliant but fleeting opportunity which now presents itself, and to assure them that England's might and perseverance will not be withheld from any righteous effort to secure the strength and union of the Balkan peoples.

Yours very sincerely,

(Sgd.) WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

¹ See p. 36.

to understand that Bulgaria was lost, and that effort would be futile. Unfortunately the Foreign Office obstinately refused to remove him until a year later.

It was true, as Mr. Buxton discovered, that the Radoslavoff Government, which as everybody knew was Austrophil (the result of the Bucharest Treaty), accorded German sailors and German munitions through transit to Turkey, and had mined the Black Sea harbours against Russia, and that King Ferdinand's sympathies were equally with Austria; he had, in fact, a wireless installation which kept him in constant touch with Vienna. On the other hand, the Opposition parties, and the people, were pro-Entente in sympathy: both in Greece and in Roumania an almost similar cleavage of opinion existed. In all three countries, the Courts were pro-German. But, owing to the poor quality of its representative at Sofia, the Foreign Office was unduly pessimistic and therefore inactive in regard to the situation in Bulgaria, Sir W. Tyrrell, for instance, remarking to Mr. Buxton before he started on his journey, 'Don't go: Bulgaria has gone over already.'

Mr. Buxton and his brother were conveyed from Brindisi, at Mr. Churchill's instructions, by H.M.S. *Hussar* and were received with enthusiasm by the citizens of Sofia, and the Opposition parties. Their welcome, indeed, was such that the Austrophil Government had, perforce, to make some show of being agreeably disposed towards them. They conducted a vigorous propaganda in every possible direction, in Government and Opposition circles, gave public lectures, ostensibly academic, to which everybody that counted came, and spoke at the many banquets held in their honour. Mr. Buxton's diary records endless interviews: 'callers generally arrived before we finished dressing, clamouring at the door of our room as is the custom of Balkan lands and the day ended in long after-dinner conversations.'

Since 1903, Mr. Buxton had been regarded as the advocate of the Balkan peoples against Turkish misrule, and of Bulgaria in particular, so that his position was above party. In spite of the fact that his policy was distinctly partisan, 'he was listened to', as one observer wrote, 'with bated breath by both sides', although after a time the Government press began to launch attacks against him. The Opposition (such leaders as Gueschoff and Daneff) meanwhile regarded his presence as a great asset and begged him to stay. He was told that he created an atmosphere in which the latent pro-Entente feeling could flourish and express itself.

King Ferdinand, who had firmly refused to see the Entente Ministers, granted Mr. Buxton an audience. He remarked to a diplomat on this episode 'Mr. B. a forcé le consigne.' "The King", writes Mr. Buxton in his diary of the visit, "managed to hold his tongue but to seem very eager. Charles, to whom he would not speak much, was impressed by his cleverness. I thought it well to recall the anti-Turk days and his mother's anti-Turkism, which she displayed at lunch in 1903, and how he promised her to be anti-Turk. He eagerly replied, 'I kept my promise', referring to the War of 1912. He asked about the position of the King of Italy and Roumania. He would express no opinion except in favour of neutrality. He said, 'J'écoute, mais je ne répons pas. Nous devons rester comme dans un petit cocon.'" His position of sitting on the fence waiting for the highest bid could not have been more neatly or more cynically expressed.

With Bax-Ironside, the British Minister, Mr. Buxton overcame the obvious difficulties of his position, and managed to co-operate rather well. How was the Minister to treat him? Was he to be received as a special envoy of the Government? The Foreign Office never answered Bax-Ironside's telegraphed inquiry, but he was enjoined to telegraph the messages which

Mr. Buxton was to send to the Foreign Office and members of the Cabinet.

It was unfortunate that on this question the Foreign Office suffered, like the Cabinet, from a divided mind. Mr. Buxton's status was being hotly disputed by the opposing Bulgarian parties, and when Sir E. Grey, pressed to show his loyalty to Serbia and her ally, Greece, declared to the London correspondent of a Greek newspaper that Mr. Buxton's visit was purely private, the effect in official Sofia was greatly to diminish the value of the mission.

Sir E. Grey, reflecting the official mind, was evidently not so sensitive to the possibilities of the mission as were the more energetic members of the Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill. In spite of these handicaps, Mr. Buxton was able to secure information of great value which he telegraphed to the British Government. The most important proposal was embodied in a telegram (dated 22 October) which read as follows:

‘We find opinion in responsible circles that in order to secure military action by Roumania, and in event of war with Turkey by Bulgaria, it is not desirable to negotiate with small States but that Entente Powers should make declaration such as follows, namely:

First, they support claim of Servia to Bosnia.

Second, in event of Bulgaria forthwith showing friendly neutrality towards Roumania and Servia and undertaking to attack Turkey in case of war between Turkey and Entente, they will support claim of Bulgaria to the parts of Macedonia indicated by Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty 1912, and in case of war with Turkey, they will support claim of Bulgaria to Enos Midia line.

Third, in event of Bulgaria receiving these parts of Macedonia, they will support the further claim of Servia to Dalmatian ports.

It is thought important that declaration should be formal and made by the three Powers jointly. Promise to support territorial claims is understood not to be absolute guarantee. Please

compare my letter which expands above suggestion. Above declaration would remove menace of Bulgarian attack which hampers Roumania.'

The circumstances required nothing less than a joint and imperious declaration by the Allied Powers. To attempt to secure an agreement to these proposals separately from each of the Balkan States was to attempt the impossible. A firm statement from the Triple Entente would have been of incalculable value at this juncture.

Mr. Buxton's proposal was to be endorsed within a week by a joint telegram from the British, French, and Russian Ministers at Sofia urging the same policy. Sir E. Grey was adamant; he replied that if Serbia made concessions, it would be very helpful, but pressure was out of the question. Mr. Buxton's view was more objective. Nothing could have been more mistaken than to imagine that Serbia would ever make concessions, unless the Entente compelled her to do so. As her future rested completely in their hands, pressure could have been exercised without undue risk, and it was foolish to pay attention to the threats of defection that Passich, the Serbian Premier, was making in his improvised quarters at Nisch.¹ *Force majeure*, moreover, would have saved Passich's face; he could probably not have yielded of his own motion without appearing a traitor.

THE BALKAN COURTS

Mr. Buxton decided that the work necessitated a visit to Roumania. Alone of the neighbouring States it was friendly with Bulgaria, and its attitude might

¹ Lord Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years*. See p. 186 also p. 191, where Sir Edward Grey describes an interview with the Serbian Minister at the Foreign Office. When the Serbian Minister said that they would all rather die than let Bulgaria have Monastir, Grey (to use his own words) 'became respectfully silent'.

therefore be especially important. Interviews with M. Bratiano, M. Take Jonescu, and Colonel Napier, the British military attaché threw light on several factors. It was also desirable to see the King, whose influence in political affairs was even greater than that of other Balkan sovereigns. King Carol and Queen Elizabeth (Carmen Sylva) were figures of such public interest and esteem that Mr. Buxton recorded details of the interview. His diary runs:

‘I had visited the Queen by Hilda Deichmann’s desire, ten years ago on the Rhine and she had asked me to come to Sinaia, so I left a letter at the Palace intended to combine the friendly with the abject. The result was the appearance of an orderly in our bedroom bearing large cards of invitation to tea. We learnt afterwards from the King’s Secretary that the Queen had said when she got my letter, “I asked him to come ten years ago, but he never came. He has chosen a very odd moment to accept”. It was indeed *outré* when our object is known to be to get Roumania to fight Germany, and the Royalties are in a critical struggle with their people, fighting for their thrones, for it was a question of abdication if the Government went to War.

‘The Queen looked like the portrait of Elizabeth Fry, with flowing robes, snowy hair, and Scotch cheek bones; she must be over 70. Three Roumanian ladies, frumps of an advanced age, handed us tea, while we talked to the Queen, who kept plying us with caviar, ham, and cheese in little round lumps on bread; it was difficult to eat without becoming plastered with caviar.

‘I fell even more in love with the Queen than ten years ago at her villa at Neuwied. We talked about Hilda Deichmann first, and then the War, Anglo-German relations, woman suffrage, Wells’ books, her philanthropies and Hilda’s books, “higher thought” and its relation to current religious forms. She said she attended Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches indifferently, though preferring the first, finding that private ideas harmonized with each. I was charmed with her views, and am convinced that if she were not a queen, but say a retired widow in London, I should cultivate her for her combination of cleverness, intellectuality, simplicity, sweetness, benevolence, and beauty of voice and appearance.

‘When it seemed about time to go, the King very quietly came in, in blue uniform with various orders. The whole “entourage” fled and we four were left alone. The Queen told the King that Charles spoke German, and on Charles saying that he had many German friends, he said: “I hope they will soon be your friends again.”

‘He soon relapsed into French, and I fired off my gospel about England fighting for small nations (and therefore being worth while for Roumania to fight for). Whereupon the Queen, whose feelings are violently pro-German, interrupted before he could answer, ridiculing the idea. She complained that the Balkan Committee had neglected Roumania, which gave us another chance of urging our view, a difficult job in the circumstances.

‘The Queen soon drew me into separate conversation, and Charles remained with the King. Charles discoursed at length with the King, who was rather deaf. He was told about our doings. He seemed specially to enjoy hearing about King Ferdinand, and Charles gave Ferdy away freely. Apropos of our visit to Strumitza, the King said that he had secured it for the Bulgars in 1913 and had tried also to get Drama and Kavalla for them, but Venizelos had not followed his advice. Apropos of the entente with Bulgaria, he was very keen for it but could not cede any territory. On the War, he said it was very evenly balanced and it was quite uncertain which side would win. Roumania should be neutral, as Ferdy had said of Bulgaria.

‘A strange event was to follow. In the early morning we heard the church bell tolling. When the waiter brought our coffee, he said that the King had died at six o’clock. The King had been so charming that we were much moved and it became the more interesting to note down what he had said.’

The crowded streets at the King’s funeral gave an opportunity for the next event in the history of Mr. Buxton’s mission. An emissary of the Young Turks who had shadowed him from Sofia, was able to approach unperceived and fire his revolver at point-blank range at the two brothers as they sat in a car outside their hotel. Mr. Buxton was saved by the toughness of his pocket-book, but was shot by a subsequent bullet through the jaw. Mr. Charles Buxton was shot through

the lung. The outrage was no doubt part of the Young Turk effort to turn Turkish popular feeling to the side of Germany and away from its pro-English tradition. M. Take Jonescu interpreted the act as a crude attempt to terminate Mr. Buxton's influence in Bulgaria. He wrote in a newspaper article 'a brilliant idea of the Young Turks to force the Bulgars into an alliance by killing their best friend'. Jonescu attributed the attempt to Enver Bey who at the time shared with Talaat the Government of Turkey. These were the very people who in previous years had looked to the Buxtons for help in creating a favourable British opinion for the Young Turk régime, and had accepted their hospitality in England.

What some Germans thought of the matter may be inferred from the following reference which appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt*:

'Out of Christianity and hatred of the Turks Buxton did a splendid business for his Fatherland, but when he snapped his mighty jaws one could hear the bones of poor Turkey crushed between them. A wild young Turk has shot Herr Buxton in the jaw. Of course this is a deed which every civilized man must disapprove. But I cannot help myself. I rejoice that it was precisely in the mouth that this Mr. Buxton was wounded. For it was a mouth full of guile and arrogance towards everything that was not English, and so this shot seems to me symbolical. Your own island country has been shot through your esteemed jaw, Mr. Buxton. I know that it is brutal, but with all my heart I hope that it may do you and old England good.'

After a month spent in recovery at a Roumanian hospital, a visit was paid to the new Queen, who owing to her English associations was regarded as an asset to the Allies' policy. The diary hints at some of the forces which competed for the direction of Roumanian policy:

'Queen Marie was carefully dressed for the part of a royal mourner and young queen. Peaked black crêpe head-dress, with veil thrown back, like Catherine of Aragon in Henry VIII. She

suggests the actress, not by being made up (though the yellow hair and the style slightly correspond) but by vivacity combined with complete control of voice and movement. A very able talker and hiding all trace of the perfunctory and of the boredom which formal granting of undesired interviews must create. She plays on various instruments; she could be pathetically personal, witty, seriously political, literary, or artistic. Amusing at other people's expense without being unkind. She said her position was difficult and she was not told everything etc., etc., indicating "no politics" with a very delicate and considerate touch. But she soon asked us about our seeing the old King and about Bulgaria and we got back to politics. Her sympathies then came out without restraint. She and the old King ("poor old man"), though great friends, found themselves out of tune on the war. Queen Elizabeth (the "poor old thing") and Hilda came in for comment with the gentlest hint of criticism. The old Queen was violently German and they did not talk of "good news" because it meant different things.'

The return of the Buxton brothers to Bulgaria was a triumphal journey, they were acclaimed at every station by the populace, and in Sofia their popularity was greatly enhanced. They were regarded as having bled for Bulgaria. Circumstances were now more difficult. Turkey had in the meantime joined the Central Powers, and the necessity of a tangible offer was still not apparent to the British Foreign Office. Mr. Buxton's hopes were again to be dashed, and he decided to return to London to continue there his pleading for swift action.

A fortnight was spent in Serbia en route. The little town of Nisch was the acting capital, Belgrad having been abandoned. The diary runs:

'Nisch—a town of 20,000 now holding 100,000. A camp of uprooted public life, cabinet, parliament, departments, legations, war services, wounded, and refugees. Recruits both old and very young, mostly without uniforms. Old dotards doing guard work, with fixed bayonets. Women bringing supplies to the depots. The wounded—a terrible sight. New arrivals from

Kraguyevatz crowd out the others before their wounds are properly dressed. In the familiar restaurant of the Europa Hotel, the whole floor is a mosaic of pain, men pick their way in and out on crutches; the groans of the mutilated, the uncontrolled mutterings of fever, fill our ears.

‘Outside from every direction refugees swarm in like a flood; they fill the poor-houses and the schools, every available corner and shelter. We go round with the Mayor and look at the pitiful mass of humanity lying in the darkness, and in squalor with their remnants of possessions, their tiny bundles of clothes and food. A candle light here and there serves only to deepen the gloom. There have been many deaths on the road, and abandoned babies. In a box lay two dolls—no! they were babies, born prematurely, tiny and gasping. Still the refugees come. No room for more. They invade the private houses, the priest takes in forty in his small house—twelve families housed without charge by this kindly cleric. The last of the arrivals must remain outside all night in their ox-carts under a frosty moon.’

Here at Nisch, moving about among this remote rabble, was an important personage, Passich, the veteran Premier of Serbia, able to bluff the Allies into refusing the smallest concession which might bring to their side the invaluable aid of Bulgaria, but now better known for the fact (generally accepted) that his government connived at the murder of the Archduke¹ and thus succeeded in producing the War, which he correctly viewed as the way to a Greater Serbia.

‘Lunched with Passich and family’, continues Mr. Buxton’s diary, ‘and saw Entente Ministers and other diplomats at the “Club” and their houses. Attended the formal sitting of the Skupshtina when the new Government made its declaration of policy. At Passich’s request I visited the King at Kraguyevatz. Contributed funds to refugees and Red Cross, arranged to give a packet of cigarettes to each of the 15,000 men of the Morava division, which had the hardest work [in retaking Valievo].

¹ See Mowat, *Concert of Europe*, where it is shown that Dmitrijevitch, chief of the Intelligence section of the Serbian War Office, ‘planned to have the Archduke assassinated’. The Serbian Government knew of the plot, but sent no explicit warning (p. 334).

Thrilling scenes at army headquarters, just as the astonishing repulse of the Austrians took place. Public joy brought a lump to the throat. Endless stream of Austrian prisoners came in. We talked to some of the Austrian officers in the prison camp. Pleasant middle-class type, very glad to be out of the fray.'

The next chance of work was in Greece. In Athens, it was essential to study the manner in which concessions, needed to win Bulgaria, could be approved by counterbalancing them with the prospects of conquests in other regions, Austrian or Turkish. Venizelos was agreeable to work with.

'Venizelos', runs Mr. Buxton's notes, 'is most attractive, charmingly deferential, and flatteringly affectionate and confidential, a combination of astuteness with simple unaffected manners and peculiarly winning smile, possibly a man of the Lincoln type. He is delightfully devoted to shop. When Charles tried to make conversation on ancient Athens, he cut it short by producing from his pocket a paper of statistics of the Bulgar population in Greek Macedonia. It was shortly after this that M. Venizelos stated his readiness to cede Kavalla to Bulgaria' (an offer of which the Allies failed to take advantage).

A factor in Greek politics was the dislike of King Constantine for Venizelos, and an incident which Mr. Buxton noticed recalls the notorious struggle between the pro-Ally Cretan and Kaiser Wilhelm's brother-in-law.

On visiting the King with his brother, Mr. Buxton noticed that they passed in the entrance hall M. Venizelos waiting for an audience. He was kept waiting till Mr. Buxton emerged. The opportunity had been taken to inflict a slight by appointing a time for the Prime Minister and then leaving him to wait for nearly an hour.

PARIS

On his way home, Mr. Buxton stayed in Paris in order to impress his views on M. Delcassé, the French Foreign

Secretary, and M. Izvolsky, the Russian Ambassador, both men whose politics had contributed to the rivalries which brought about the World War.

Mr. Buxton's notes his impression of Delcassé in his diary:

'A very ugly man. Short, scrubby grey hair, a large grey moustache, black beady eyes, uneven complexion. He gives a tremendous impression of force. He argued vigorously all the time and never beat about the bush. Evidently knows the Balkan affair thoroughly in spite of all the other things he has to think of. Fortunately understands the Bulgarian claims, but is annoyed with them for "one reason". "They demand the absolute. Politics are relative. They go beyond the limits of political sense." He has been a dangerous man for Europe, and it is easy to imagine the time when the German Emperor, in an unparalleled interference with the affairs of another country, insisted on his dismissal, before the Algeciras Conference.'

Of his visit to Izvolsky, he writes:

'Izvolsky, famous as Russian Foreign Secretary in the Bosnian crisis in 1908, implacable enemy of Count Aehrenthal (Austrian Foreign Minister) forced to knuckle under, and then free to quit office soon after, has the air of a kindly and sensible old gentleman with sound opinions, not giving great impression of force. We had agreed that if he passed muster we would try him with the suggestion that the Triple Entente policy in regard to the Balkans should be dealt with by a committee like the London Balkan Conference, and that it should be at Paris in order to include himself. He purred visibly rather than audibly. It was exceedingly interesting to see the man about whom we thought so much in the years of Macedonian reform.'

From the archives published by the Russian Soviet Government, we are able to see the effect of Mr. Buxton's mission on the Russian and French Governments.

The following telegrams exchanged between Izvolsky and Sassonoff, the Russian Foreign Secretary, show indeed that Mr. Buxton had succeeded in persuading the Russian Government of the imperative need to

square Bulgaria. For M. Sassonoff at once informed the French and British Ambassadors at Petrograd that the Allies would be justified in demanding the cession of Kavalla to Bulgaria (the Aegean port which she needed). M. Delcassé was not, however, ready to agree, wrongly thinking that M. Venizelos would not agree to this cession. There was imperative need of an immediate agreement between Paris, Petrograd, and London relating to the Balkan question as a whole.

‘A. P. Izvolsky, Russian Ambassador in Paris,
to S. D. Sassonoff, Minister of Foreign
Affairs.

Tel. No. 739. 28 Dec. 1914 to Jan. 1915.

Copy to London.

I have just been visited by Noel Buxton, the well-known Chairman of the London Balkan Committee, and a Member of Parliament, on his return from a journey through the Balkan States. He gives me the following information in the course of a conversation, which I have summarized.

1. It is wrong to think that the Balkan Kingdoms can agree among themselves as to any redistribution. The future frontiers must be laid down authoritatively by the Entente Powers.

2. The declaration made at Sofia by these Powers is insufficient. It is essential that Bulgaria should be definitely promised in Macedonia at least the frontier of 1912. On the other hand, the effect of the Serbian successes has been that Bulgaria no longer insists on the immediate occupation of Macedonian territory.

3. As to Serbia, he also considers the declaration of the Entente Powers too vague. Passich will entertain a real concession to Bulgaria only in the event of Serbia obtaining a firm promise of an outlet to the Adriatic, with Ragusa and Spalato. It is essential to get Italian consent to this as soon as possible.

4. In Greece they would be ready to cede Kavalla to Bulgaria, if they are promised that part of the Asia Minor coast inhabited by Greeks, with Smyrna. This last information seemed to me of special interest, as it was evidently obtained by Buxton from an authoritative source.

ISVOLSKY.’

‘Izvolsky to Sassonoff.

Tel. No. 740. Cont. No. 739. 28 Dec. 1914 10 Jan. 1915.

Copy to London.

Buxton has seen Delcassé, and given him the same information. On my asking how Delcassé looked on allotting Greece a part of Asia Minor, he said Delcassé replied “favourably enough”. In his own words Delcassé said he was personally in no way a partisan of any territorial acquisitions for France at the expense of Turkey. But it was necessary to take French public opinion into account. It was usually considered that French interests were confined to Syria and Palestine. It must be borne in mind that the sovereignty of any single European Power in Palestine was out of the question. As for Syria, it had no value in a material sense. Smyrna interested France as the centre of the French railway system. Moreover, England was also interested in this region, and its view was not known to him.

I conclude from Delcassé’s observations that the question of the future partition of Turkey has not yet been elaborated or examined by him. If the idea of directing the expansion of Greece to the coast of Asia Minor, and thus diverting it from Macedonia seems to you sound, it should now be put forward here. We might exploit for this purpose the Grecophil tendencies which are so active in certain circles here.

IZVOLSKY.’

‘Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, S. D. Sassonoff,
to Minister in Athens, E. P. Demidoff.

No. 147. 8/21 Jan. 1915.

Copies Paris to London.

‘In correction of my yesterday’s telegram, No. 137, I have handed the British and French Ambassadors the following Memo.

M. Sassonoff considers that in return for the offer to Greece of territorial compensations in Asia Minor, frontier rectifications in Epirus, the Dodecanese (with or without Rhodes) etc., the Allied Powers are justified in demanding the cession of Kavalla to Bulgaria.

Moreover Mr. Noel Buxton has assured M. Izvolsky that he knows from a thoroughly reliable source that the Hellenic

Government is disposed to cede Kavalla, if it is assured the reversion to the Asiatic Coast with Smyrna. The important assistance that Bulgaria might afford the Allies is a primary consideration, and justifies the sacrifice imposed on Greece in the common cause—a sacrifice, moreover, rewarded by such important territorial acquisitions.

Be so good as to make the declaration to the Greek Government in the above form as now amended, as soon as your colleagues obtain similar instructions.

SASSONOFF.'

'Russian Ambassador in Paris, A. P. Izvolsky,
to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, S. D. Sassonoff.

No. 12. 10/23 Jan. 1915.

Ref. to your Tels. Nos. 137 and 147.

With regard to the above Delcassé expressed himself as follows: 'Above all, in spite of the information from Buxton, he very much doubts that Venizelos will agree to the cession of Kavalla, even in exchange for Smyrna. Moreover we have to foresee that Greece will not be content with a general promise of territorial compensations in Asia Minor, and will demand exact indications as to localities. As to Smyrna, Delcassé again pointed out its importance to France as the centre of the French railway system. Personally, he has no desire for territorial acquisitions and is prepared to show the greatest compliance in that respect. But he added, the fate of Smyrna is intimately involved with the partition of Asiatic Turkey, and before assigning that place to Greece, Russia, England, and France must come to a general agreement about such partition. So far, he knows nothing of the views of England as to Smyrna, and he has instructed Cambon to ask Grey about it.

From my conversation with Delcassé I got the impression that he has not yet decided his attitude to the Smyrna matter, and that this decision will depend on what France gets in the partition of Asia Minor.

I may be allowed to add that to avoid even more serious misunderstandings than that which has arisen over Kavalla, it is very desirable to determine now in detail not only the fate of Smyrna but generally as to the partition of Asiatic Turkey.

IZVOLSKY.'

Incidentally these telegrams reveal the sordid motives which entered into every question affecting the conduct of the war—motives which contrast vividly with the high sounding aims served out by statesmen to their long-suffering peoples.

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M. Clemenceau had not yet been called to play the great role of saviour of France, but was active as editor of *L'Homme Enchaîné*. The following note records a lively talk with the 'Tiger'; he expresses some views which are more in character than is commonly held, particularly in regard to the peace settlement:

'He received us in a long grey cap, seating himself on the table. Most genial and confidential. He fancies himself a Greek scholar. He said diplomacy was getting on the right lines in the Balkans, he agreed with our views but that there was no French foreign policy at all. Delcassé thought he was one day Sir Edward Grey, and the next day, the Czar. We must certainly not neglect the Balkans, but the question of getting in the Japs was more important. He wants everybody possible. Diplomacy is always behindhand. Grey too much of a fisherman, Churchill unstable, Lloyd George he has confidence in. Neither England nor France has the Government it ought to have, but the Governments are cards we must play with.

'He despairs of permanent peace and cannot cherish illusions at 74. Germany cannot be crushed, and in any case justice must be done, and she must not be left in a position in which she will want another war.

'He went on into a most eloquent speech on his whole philosophy of life—most pessimistic. He had worked in France for forty years for liberty, but the Frenchman's idea of liberty was suppressing somebody else. There were two things in the world worth admiring—our conscience and the starry heavens; it was worth coming into the world for these.'

Clemenceau never completely forgot the essentials of a good peace when, later, the world lay at his feet to be remoulded at his will. He successfully fought the

dangerous project of extending the French frontier to the Rhine.

In London Mr. Buxton had a more difficult task. The Balkan question was primarily the business of Sir Edward Grey, but it appealed to him no more at this stage than before. Mr. Lloyd George was the advocate of an energetic Balkan policy, and he had more hopes of the Prime Minister.

'Ll. G. suddenly 'phoned', records Mr. Buxton's notes, 'asking us to meet him at the Prime Minister's at 11 a.m. Mr. Asquith took the chairman's seat at the side of the huge Cabinet table and asked us to sit opposite—a good idea for overawing the timid. Ll. G. sat by the fire.

'Asquith said amongst other things: "Ferdinand is the greatest scoundrel in Europe. I had a Dalmatian here yesterday" (produced his map) "colouring Trieste as Serbian. I said to him, "Trieste can't be promised". As to Italian claims in Dalmatia, Asquith was interested about Dante's line in the *Inferno*. 'Che Italia chiude e i suoi termini bagna', and said "gives an air of respectability to their claims."'

'It transpired that the Prime Minister took notes, formed opinions, and handed his notes to Grey.'

Mr. Buxton's diary gives other sidelights on the men upon whom England's safety depended, and also shows the difficulty of obtaining a swift decision. Several members of the Cabinet had each in turn to be informed about a situation of which they were almost wholly ignorant. The following extracts give the impressions of Lord Kitchener at the War Office and Winston Churchill at the Admiralty.

'Lord Kitchener. Feb. 8.

C. and I saw Lord Kitchener in his room at the War Office. His huge frame and vast moustache looked the traditional role, but he was genial and talkative in the extreme, though he laid down the law with Prussian authority. When trying to think he rolled his eyes to the ceiling, displaying vast eyeballs. "If Austria came to Nisch," I said, "Bulgaria would be forced to hand over the railway." *Kitchener*: "No, she would give it

gladly, only if Russia went to Varna would Bulgaria be held. Bulgaria is pledged to Austria." He developed the usual argument about impossibility of squaring Bulgars.—Balkan people implacable.—Each must have blood.—Another fight inevitable.—Serbia would be alienated! Greece ditto. A Serbian General, whose name he could not remember, said they would go over to Austria "rather than cede a yard". This, he said, showed that Serbia would be chilled, if any approach was made to Bulgaria, but he added "You never can believe what they say". He agreed that we could control Serbia through the ports, but promises would be useless to Bulgaria, because she might not be able to hold what we gave her. "Not when the Serbs had recruited in Ragusa." He added, "English promises must be final".

'This high moral line was his most original contribution. It was excellent, but did not help to recruit the Bulgars which I urged to be the end in view, and which he admitted. One recalled his stiff moral message to the army in France. He moderated when Winston entered for business, and we left, Winston firing a parting question to me: 'Have you converted him?' and K. saying he feared not. K.'s final argument was that Bulgaria had no army worth considering, because it had mostly perished in the two Balkan wars. His evident pleasure in his epigrammatic dogmas seemed to me to spoil his value for war-diplomacy.'

'Mr. Winston Churchill.

C. and I lunched at Admiralty House. Churchill most cordial, repeating, "You've shed your blood for your country," but unfortunately less enthusiastic about the way to cut off Germany from Turkey. He declaimed admirably on the Near East, anticipating brilliantly what we were likely to say. He sketched an Entente map for fighters, showing what those who fought for us would get. "We want every one, I want the Prince of Monaco." He was best about Turkey. "The only thing that excuses all this horrible slaughter. Germany should have a share in Asia Minor—a nice idea to feed them on the mangled remains of their own ally." As to Turkey in Asia, a direct frontier with Russia would be safest—always safer than buffers.

'We turned to war prospects in general. He said, "We can break through." I said, "In Belgium?" He replied, "I won't

say where, but we shall crack one of the lobster's claws somewhere.'

'(We were to realize later that the Dardanelles policy had turned his thoughts, and L. G.'s too, from the Balkan policy, whose advocates they had been.)'

Mr. Buxton continued to press his views in a series of memoranda¹ in which he and his brother Charles surveyed the whole Balkan position. They argued in favour of a firm pronouncement by the Triple Entente declaring its intentions to be, in the event of victory, that (1) Serbia should receive Bosnia, Herzegovina, and access to the sea in Dalmatia, subject to which (2) Bulgaria should be promised the cession of Macedonian territory up to the minimum secured to Bulgaria by the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912, and (3) in order to secure not only neutrality but Bulgaria's assent to attack Turkey, Kavalla should be transferred at the end of the war, Greece to be compensated by the promise of Smyrna.

The proposal was warmly approved by Lord Bryce:

'I agree with it almost entirely', he writes (7 Feb. 1915), 'indeed it represents pretty much what conversations with the Serbian and Bulgarian Ministers have brought me to. You are altogether right in holding that Bulgaria is entitled to have precise terms, that she ought to have Central Macedonia and probably Kavalla also, that Serbia would almost certainly acquiesce if she were at the same time promised Bosnia and Herzegovina and part of Dalmatia with access to the sea (with those she could probably before long get Croatia also), and that similarly Greece must be promised Smyrna and all the islands that Italy can be persuaded not to press for. We might even think of dangling Cyprus before her, which is of very little use to us.

'But I should make it a condition that Bulgaria joins the Allies actively, in which case she ought to have Adrianople also and the whole coast of the Marmora.

¹ See Noel Buxton and Leese, *Balkan Problems and European Peace*, p. 80, for full text.

‘All the States are now bluffing and will continue to bluff till a positive statement is made by the Allies. They ought to be told that if they do not accept this they may get nothing. Roumania, of course, will have Transylvania—a great prize for her.

‘My fear is that the F.O. are not fully alive to the supreme importance of settling this. Perhaps, however, they anticipate difficulties from Russia.’

The Foreign Office were not receptive of Mr. Buxton’s ideas. Indeed, it is clear from Sir Edward Grey’s memoirs that, in the spring of 1915, while France and Russia were urging the need of obtaining Bulgaria’s support—an attitude taken partly as a result of Mr. Buxton’s efforts in Paris—Grey constantly opposed objections.¹

Mr. Lloyd George’s Efforts.

Mr. Lloyd George was opposed both in temperament and opinion to Sir Edward Grey and chafed against the obstruction offered to the policy of attaching Bulgaria. Mr. Buxton, therefore, saw the best hope in bringing together Mr. Lloyd George and the Bulgarian Minister. This he effected on three occasions, each time at private dinners at the Savoy Hotel, the third party including Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Churchill.

Mr. Lloyd George made statements to the Minister which, to Mr. Buxton’s intense satisfaction, would have been adequate to secure the entry of Bulgaria on the Allies’ side.

An interesting description of these conversations appears in Mr. Buxton’s diary.

March 2. ‘Finding that both parties refused to make advances

¹ See, Lord Grey of Falloden, *Twenty-Five Years*, pp. 190-191.

Grey to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg (13 February 1915).

‘Your telegram of 14 February. Bulgaria. I agree that something should be said at Sofia, but I am very apprehensive of the danger of making promises at Sofia that will destroy Serbian morale without securing the support or even neutrality of Bulgaria. . . .

to each other, I suggested to Ll. G. that he should meet the Bulgarian Minister privately.

‘I arranged a sumptuous private room and *recherché* dinner remembering Kitchener’s plan with the Boer delegates. I regarded oysters and champagne as *de rigueur*. They were so successful that Ll. G. plunged into talk and became impatient to get to real business. The waiters kept interrupting this, so he said, “Let’s cut the dinner short and get rid of the waiters”. So we cut off the savoury and got cigars. Then to my surprise and delight he committed himself to offering Monastir and Ochrida to Bulgaria. He used “we” quite definitely, implying the Entente. This was an immense step, but Misheff said Bulgaria would need Kavalla. Ll. G. frankly said this was impossible.

‘I saw Ll. G. next day in his room at the House. He was indignant that Grey would not move and said in a hoarse whisper, “There is not a man in this country who knows his own mind”. Soon after this the great crisis occurred. Greece proved a failure, and thus Grey was proved wrong. I assumed that every one saw the logic of events, and that even Grey would now at once approach Bulgaria, as he could not get Greece. I thought our work was superseded and began to arrange for another job. I asked Sir Ian Hamilton to take me as a liaison officer, but before going away for Easter I sought a final talk with A. G. Clerk at the Foreign Office and Hankey at the Defence Committee. From Clerk I found that the F.O. had not advanced an inch. But Hankey at once said, “What you say about France and Kavalla is vital. You must come and tell Ll. G. instantly.” We went and found him at Downing Street. He said he had been urging the right view on Grey in vain. In desperate hope I proposed his seeing Misheff again. He agreed.

‘On Sunday night he came up from Walton Heath and dined as before. I wrote him that C. R. B. [Charles R. Buxton] ought to come too. It was important to note what was said.

‘While Misheff talked to C. R. B., I handed Lloyd George a note as follows: “Our guest volunteered the information that in his opinion Monastir and Kavalla would be enough to secure Bulgaria’s action. As to Grey’s arguments, facts have proved his judgement to be wrong.” As the “Excellency” was not listening (talking to C. R. B.), Lloyd George said he quite agreed

and cheerily ran down Grey and the Foreign Office. He said a man avoids danger for *himself* by doing nothing, while the public interest suffers. As soon as the waiter had left the room, he said to M. "You may take Kavalla when you like". Two and a half hours were spent on this, and when he left, I felt that our six months' efforts were not in vain. This is all that Bulgaria should need and the Entente should offer. Oddly enough, it seems that, but for us amateurs helping the energetic section of the Cabinet, this offer would not have been made.'

'On April 10, I had a wire from Misheff saying he must absolutely see me on April 12th.

'I found he had had a wire from his Government saying that the terms offered by Grey and Lloyd George showed a considerable "variance", and asking for a written statement by Grey. Misheff said he felt he had misled his Government and thought he might have to resign. He wondered whether to tell Grey, as it felt like getting Lloyd George into trouble. I said he should certainly see Grey, as Lloyd George would stand to his guns.

'Lloyd George sent for me to the Treasury and told me that at the Cabinet he had said—"If Bulgaria enquires whether in return for co-operation the Entente will promise Monastir and Kavalla, the answer will be 'Yes'". In the end the Cabinet agreed, including Grey. A few days later Lloyd George 'phoned me at 9 a.m. to come after breakfast to Downing Street. We walked round St. James's Park, he saying very unpleasant things of Grey and Nicolson. He said Grey would not abide by the Cabinet decision.'

Grey was now perhaps holding his hand for another reason, which, however, was not then apparent to any one outside the Foreign Office. Mr. Buxton had received a hint from an official whom Grey had asked him to see. 'What would Italy say', he asked Mr. Buxton, 'to the promise of a Dalmatian port to Serbia?' For the moment the Foreign Office appeared to be out for bigger game than Bulgaria. Italy was being lured into the Allied Camp, with promises, as we now know, of great rewards guaranteed by a secret treaty—(the

Treaty of London, 1915)—and those rewards included large slices of Dalmatia and other territory inhabited by southern Slavs. Mr. Buxton had written to Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, on 30 January, to object to the view that Italy's legitimate claims clashed with those of Serbia. The war settlement proved this to be true, and Mr. Buxton's alternative proposal—the promise to Italy of a colony in Asia Minor at Turkey's expense, had the equal merit of being as incapable of fulfilment as the attribution of North Dalmatia to Italy, and the additional merit of being capable of enraging only an enemy—the Turks, and not an Ally—the Serbs, which the Entente proposal would certainly do. The Allied bribes proved immediately successful.

‘The Treaty’, declares Dr. Gooch, ‘was enough to satisfy the hungriest of appetites . . . and it is no wonder that its authors desired to hide from the world—and above all from Serbia—a document which handed over North Dalmatia to Italy; and there is no other palliative than the familiar plea of necessity offered for Canning's seizure of the Danish fleet in 1807 and for Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality.’¹

The need to conclude arrangements with Italy probably prevented the Foreign Office from feeling immediately free to adopt Mr. Buxton's proposal. But almost as soon as Italy had declared war on 23 May, the Entente Powers (Italy included) dispatched on 29 May a note to Bulgaria which completely accorded with Mr. Buxton's policy, as a comparison of the note and of his memorandum of January clearly shows. To this extent he had succeeded in his mission; he had the gratification of seeing his policy adopted by the Entente, but it was a limited satisfaction, the Allies were too late.

¹ G. P. Gooch, *History of Europe*, p. 575.

In July Mr. Lloyd George was moved to a final effort, and Mr. Buxton records:

‘Mr. Lloyd George proposed dining on 6 July and asked if I would also invite Churchill, Carson, and Bonar Law to meet the Bulgarian Minister. Carson was ill and we then asked Simon. I told Misheff to be very frank and I told Ll. G. that Bulgaria had not understood his offer. We met in the same place at the Savoy. The affair was very British. The conversation went on mostly as if the foreigner was not there at all. Ll. G. recalled famous sayings and referred to Danton’s “Que mon âme soit flétri; que la France soit libre”. Bonar Law said to Churchill: “You’ve been more occupied in ‘flettring’ other people’s names. . . . You only read books to get stuff for your speeches.” W. S. C. rebuffed this charge, but added, “It’s true that I only read with a practical object.”’

‘The party was an interesting miniature of the Coalition. They alluded to their embarrassments playfully. They said it seemed far longer than a month since Coalition life began. Bonar Law has an agreeable twist towards questions of morality and sentiment. He said, “What distresses me is the awful loss of life”. It sounded un-British. Misheff was not forthcoming and the party broke up in a pessimistic mood.’

In the few remaining weeks before Bulgaria took her fatal decision, Mr. Buxton was prompted to persist in his efforts by the knowledge that his policy was supported by high military opinion. A specially valuable adviser at this period was General Philip Howell, then the youngest general in the army, who had, while at the Staff College, studied the campaigns of Balkan armies in the Balkan War. The following terse message sent from the head-quarters of the Cavalry Corps in France, of which General Howell was Chief of Staff, is characteristic and contains a prediction which, unfortunately, was fulfilled.

‘All must recognize that Bulgaria holds the trump cards. The Boches are approaching a deadlock in the East and West: and to give them an opening in the Balkans now might wholly set them

on their feet again. What are the insuperable obstacles to their forcing a passage through Servia, joining the Bulgars and Turks, and then putting our Dardanelles people into the sea?

‘Strategically, I would sooner see Servia making a separate peace, and Greece and Roumania hostile, as long as the Bulgar was on our side. With the Bulgar we’d get the Turk, the Dardanelles, and a fine, firm base from which to take on other things: and release from a dangerous impasse.

‘I’m very busy with battle fighting in progress here: and have to be thinking of other things. But this Bulgar business is of ten times more importance, in the long run, than vastly greater victories in Champagne and Artois.’

The story of the rest is one of disappointment. The terms at this late period proved to be insufficient to attract Bulgaria.

‘It was now obvious’, to quote Dr. Gooch, ‘that Bulgaria would be lost if she received merely a conditional promise of Macedonia. British and French missions were dispatched to Sofia in July, and early in August, the Allies, led by Great Britain, pressed Serbia to cede the uncontested zone of 1912. The Skuptschina sat in secret session on August 16th and approved concessions, but it was too late.’

Ferdinand had decided that, if he were to back the winner, he should throw in his lot with Germany, and when the British grand attack failed at Suvla Bay his mind was made up—he took the step which led his country eventually into irretrievable disaster, and was to cost him his crown. His ‘vaulting ambition o’erleaped itself’.

The delay for which Grey was responsible in January and February caused the Allies to miss the most favourable opportunity of striking while the iron was hot. Valentine Chirol¹ confirms Mr. Buxton’s view that action should have been taken months sooner. At the end of February, 1915, just before the first bombardment of the Dardanelles, was the moment to

¹ *Fifty Years in a Changing World*, p. 313.

take action. Quoting the opinion of Dr. Vladoff, leader of the most influential Opposition party, he states:

‘that was the moment for the British Government to prove to the Bulgarian people that co-operation with them was the surest way to the fulfilment of its national aspirations, and above all in Macedonia . . . there would have been such an upheaval of public opinion that neither Ferdinand nor his Ministers would be able to withstand it, even if there had not been good reasons for believing, as Dr. Vladoff did, that the Prime Minister himself might be won over.’

It was a mortifying experience for Mr. Buxton when, having succeeded at Christmas, 1914, in impressing the Russian and French Governments with the imperative need to co-ordinate Allied policy in the Balkans, he found that the British Foreign Office turned a deaf ear to his urgent warnings and delayed concerted Allied action until it was too late.

WORLD WAR—AMERICAN MEDIATION

1916-17

AS the months went by, the torture, mutilation, and death of men proceeded apace on a scale undreamt of—a veritable engineering process of massacre—and the struggle seemed endless. What meaning had physical victory under such circumstances? The answer to such questions depended on one's view of a lasting peace, and bearing on this there were two schools of thought.

A just and lasting settlement, according to the one school, should include the complete restoration of the independence of the invaded countries, Belgium, Serbia, Roumania; the rearrangement of frontiers so as to ensure as far as possible the liberation of peoples under alien rule; the acceptance of a League organization which superseding ententes and alliances would make a recurrence of war impossible. Such a peace would be in accordance with the public professions of the Allied Governments, and with the declarations which they made to strengthen the will of their peoples to continue the struggle. The acceptance of such a peace by the Germans would effectually discredit the militarist forces in Germany.

The second school held that a decisive military triumph would alone suffice to put an end to German militarism. It was necessary not only to realize one's political aims, but to punish the enemy, so as to prove to it that war did not pay; to this school a military triumph was an end in itself, to be attained regardless of the objects that could be secured before the 'knock-out' blow was delivered, regardless of the further sacrifice of human life and treasure or of the injury to oneself which it would cause and which might well be as disastrous in its effects as a defeat.

If the war was viewed from the first standpoint, it was obvious that diplomacy became a most effective means of aid to our fighting men. The mediation of a neutral country, the good offices of the United States for example, utilized to ascertain what were the objects of the belligerents, could perform a most vital service. But to the second school, intent on a 'knock-out', mediation would be of no use. On the contrary, it would be positively harmful as weakening the will to fight, an unfriendly act, the act, in truth, of a country favourable to the enemy.

The desire of the second school to punish the enemy was not so simple or ingenuous as it appeared on the surface, it cloaked aims which they could not admit in public, namely the retention of conquests already achieved, however much those conquests belied their avowed professions, e.g., German colonies in Africa and Asia, and the need of gaining more conquests with which the various allies could be rewarded for their co-operation, such, for instance, as the disposal of Slav territory to Italy, or the transference of Constantinople and the Straits to Russia—arrangements embodied in the Secret Treaties of London, 1915.

In Berlin, the Moderate Party led by Delbrueck were at this time (1916-17) 'working hard for a definite statement from the German Government promising complete re-establishment of Belgium, with no other strings attached to it than agreement by the Entente not to try to control Belgium in military or commercial respects', so an American diplomat accredited to a neutral country wrote to Mr. Buxton.

It was evidently clear that in the enemy countries, no less than in the Allied countries, opinion was marked by a deep cleavage: the common people believed that they were defending the fatherland; the extremist party aimed at conquests.

These groups acted and reacted on one another across

the far-flung front, and the declarations of belligerent Governments were anxiously and meticulously examined. A moderate statement by the Government of the one country would powerfully strengthen moderate forces in the enemy country, whilst a defiant uncompromising declaration would be welcomed by the militarists in the enemy country, silence the moderates, and stiffen the resistance of the enemy peoples.

The moderate school trod the most difficult path. The civilian population whose primitive passions were aroused could understand only one argument—winning the war. The popular press inflamed opinion against any group which did not support a fight to a finish. Any attempt to reason about aims was brushed aside as traitorous. Sustained by a false propaganda, which pictured the enemy as something inhuman and monstrous, the civilian population stood unquestionably behind the extremist school, whose crude policy satisfied the base instincts, and the voice of reason had little chance of a hearing.

President Wilson had, earlier in the year, delivered the first of those great speeches outlining principles of international comity which have gained for him a unique place in history. On this first occasion, his address, which confined itself to general aspects of a settlement, secured by a League of Peace, found little response among the belligerent Governments. But the rational school, the moderate thinking people in every country, were henceforth to work under immeasurably more favourable circumstances. Reinforced by the support of the President of a country whose resources cast on one side or the other of the protagonists must inevitably decide the issues of the struggle, their influence began to make itself felt both on the British and the German Governments.

The President in the spring of 1916 had also startled the world with the sudden prospect of American

mediation. When Mr. Buxton visited the United States in July in order to raise war relief funds, he sought a discussion of these ideas with Colonel House, who was the President's *alter ego* in foreign affairs. After staying with Mr. Morgenthau, previously United States Ambassador to Turkey, he visited Colonel House¹ at his summer resort in the White Mountains, and on the beautiful shores of Lake Sunapee, gained information of the highest value to which reference will be made later. These discussions turned his mind to a new field of activity.

In the neutral atmosphere of the United States it was natural that discussion should centre on the aims of the protagonists; the physical contest at that distance appeared a desolating and wasteful fratricidal struggle. If we were able to suppose that the aims of the Allies—Mr. Buxton was told—could at a given moment be fulfilled, although a final decision in the field had not been secured, would it not be an extreme folly to continue the War a single day longer? Colonel House, and other influential Americans were in fact at this time preoccupied with the idea of opening up a diplomatic channel between the Allied Powers and their enemies.

Mr. Buxton returned to England a persistent believer in the moderate school, and added his efforts to those of an influential group who were working for a negotiated settlement, in which the *avowed* aims of the Allies would be fully secured; while the war was to be vigorously prosecuted—indeed Mr. Buxton gave every possible support to the war measures of the Government: for a time he worked in the intelligence section of the Admiralty, and in the House of Commons he voted for Conscription—diplomacy should be constantly at work to discover whether the terms of a just and lasting settlement would be acceptable to the enemy; if they were not acceptable, the war was to be continued until they became so, but not a moment longer.

¹ See *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, vol. ii, pp. 265-6, 317.

Mr. Buxton discussed the position with members of the British Government, and conveyed to them information as to the state of opinion in the United States. He was fully aware of the difficulties and risks of a policy of mediation, particularly when the enemy Powers held so much Allied territory, and he sought to convince influential Americans that it was imperatively necessary for the President to stipulate for a particular set of conditions subject to the acceptance of which mediation would be possible. The following memorandum, which he sent to Colonel House and others in October 1916, illustrates his efforts to induce the Americans to take a further step.

‘AMERICA AND THE WAR

October 1916.

‘The objections to entering on negotiations are felt even by reasonable men partly because the Peace League idea is unknown to the public, but also because it is held that if the Allies stated their terms:

- (1) The enemy would misuse them.
- (2) As they would not be obtained in full, the result would be humiliating, in view of Germany’s aggression, &c.
- (3) The really best terms might not be obtained.

‘There is a risk to be run, for both parties, unless one of them is able to dictate. Neither side will take this risk, till the risk of exhaustion is greater than that of negotiating. Therefore, fighting continues long after the best terms could be agreed on.

‘Delay must occur in all bargaining, but in ordinary bargaining delay does not matter. In war it does.

‘The problem is to remove the risk. It is only soluble by the aid of a powerful neutral. If America desires to diminish bloodshed, she can do so by removing the risk which the belligerents feel, in committing themselves to definite proposals.

‘The President appeared to have this in view when he skilfully showed (on 27 May) that he would only mediate on certain conditions. While repudiating any desire to interfere with the war, he adhered to two principles which do affect it, the defeat of aggression and the defence of nationality. By so much he

made it less risky for the Allies to accept his mediation. They can feel that he would not admit Germany to the discussion till she accepted the principles he holds.

‘But a great risk remains so long as those principles are vague. If he is willing to define his principles and conditions so as to cover the bedrock claims (*v.* suggested sketch of terms),¹ it would then involve no risk to the belligerents to respond, as soon as their demands are reduced so as to harmonize with those principles. The reasoning men would have material for affecting public opinion in that direction.

‘America would not risk rebuff by committing herself to her ideal in definite form. It would be no more than a friendly suggestion. If the belligerents never accepted it, America is not humiliated, any more than she was humiliated by the absence of response to the speech of 27 May.

‘She would wait till both sides agreed to her primary conditions. The Allies would presumably have to persuade Russia to revise her policy *re* the Straits, and England *re* German colonial spheres. The acceptance of mediation might become rapid. American ideas are not different to those of the liberal sections both in England and Germany. The best terms are not best for one side only; they are best for both. . . .’

Accompanying this memorandum was an outline of terms which Mr. Buxton had drawn up representing the views commonly held by the rational school on the nature of a lasting settlement, or a ‘peace of understanding’. They included restoration of the invaded countries, the satisfaction of national claims, without involving the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the restoration of certain colonies to Germany.¹

¹

POSSIBLE TERMS

I. DEFEAT OF AGGRESSION.

A. *Evacuation* of Belgium, France, Poland, Baltic Provinces, Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania.

B. *Compensation* to Belgium by Germany.

II. ADJUSTMENTS TO MEET NATIONAL CLAIMS.

(1) *Alsace Lorraine*, Metz and District; (2) *Serbia*: Annexation of coast including Spalato, Serbo-Greco-Bulgar frontier to be

The following letter was received by Mr. Buxton on 25 October 1916:

'Dear Mr. Buxton,

I have been wanting to write to you for a long while, but the pressure of the campaign has been such that I have not had the necessary leisure.

Your letter of 19 August heartened us greatly. I read it to the President and he was pleased to know that "there was a strong drift of opinion towards reason and calculation".

The President in nearly all his speeches has emphasized the necessity of the United States joining in a League to enforce peace and I think that our people will be responsive to that idea.

With all good wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,
(Sgd.) E. M. HOUSE.'

referred to an American Commission, on a racial basis. Salonica to be an international port; (3) *Poland*: To be an independent State with or without secured access to a port on the Baltic; (4) *Italy*: to annex the Trentino; (5) *Turkey*: The Armenian Provinces to be Russian; (6) *Albania*: To be an Italian Protectorate.

Other alternatives are, of course, equally admissible—(a) Independent buffer States—as Alsace Lorraine, Poland, Yugoslavia, Bohemia; (b) Annexations followed on choice by plebiscite; (c) Undertakings by Germany to grant autonomy to Poland and Alsace Lorraine; by Austro-Hungary to Yugoslavia; and by Russia to Armenia.

III. ECONOMIC FACILITIES.

- A. *Routes*. The Straits: An International Commission to control both the Asiatic shore, and the European (up to the Bulgarian frontier); (B) *Colonial Spheres*: German purchase of Congo territories to be facilitated. German East Africa to be restored; (C) *Economic Spheres*: The Persian Gulf coast with the route to Baghdad to be British. Syria to be French with stipulations for Jewish autonomy, Adalia and district to be Italian, Anatolia and Mesopotamia as far as Baghdad to be German; (D) *The Open Door*: The belligerent powers to agree not to impose tariffs discriminatorily against any State in tropical territories controlled by them.

(Note: If France and Russia agree to apply this principle in all their spheres of influence, it might generally be applied throughout Turkey.)

At home the school to which Mr. Buxton belonged was faced by an increasingly difficult task. Lord Morley had for some time taken a gloomy view of the situation. The extremists were unfortunately gaining the upper hand.

‘The President’, he wrote to Mr. Buxton (19 August 1916), ‘I know is rather hurt that so little notice has been taken here of his speech about some sort of Peace League. He does not realize that people in this country have hardened their hearts and will not listen to reason apart from the sphere of military events.’

Lord Courtney in a letter to Mr. Buxton also agreed with this view.

‘Our reception of the Wilson advances’, he wrote, ‘has been unwisely chilling; but the Government will probably have to turn back to them. The President is strong as a neutral and can and must meet both sets of belligerents, since both under his mediation could accept terms which showed, I will not say, that both have been beaten but that both have been unsuccessful.’

THE GERMAN PEACE OFFER.

In the autumn of 1916 events were moving rapidly to a Government crisis, which resulted in the resignation of Sir E. Grey and Mr. Asquith. They made way for Mr. Lloyd George’s Coalition Government, which, predominantly Conservative in character, and in which the Labour Party was officially represented, was stiffly opposed to any question of negotiated settlement. The change was brought about a few days before the Central Powers, in a brief note, made their offer of peace negotiations on 16 December, ‘the peace prattlers being removed in the nick of time’, as the egregious popular press elegantly observed. How far foreknowledge of the German proposal to negotiate peace and of President Wilson’s offer to take soundings, which immediately followed it on December 18,¹ brought about the change

¹ President Wilson issued on December 18 an invitation to the

of Government has yet to be ascertained: there is every reason for believing that the nearness of peace negotiations was a main cause of the change. It is known that in October, Lord Lansdowne had circulated to the Cabinet a memorandum which anticipated his peace letter addressed to the nation several months later (see p. 147).

Undeterred by these new conditions, and encouraged by Lord Courtney to 'keep on in his task as midwife to American mediation', Mr. Buxton for his part urged on Ministers the case for acceptance of President Wilson's offer, and showed that it provided a means of testing the sincerity of the German proposal without endangering the Allied cause.

'If it is essential', he wrote in a private memorandum to Ministers, 'to make a response such as will satisfy American feeling, three courses appear to be open to us:

(a) If the Central Powers publicly state their terms, to state our own.

(b) To enter into private negotiations.

(c) To inform President Wilson of our aims in confidence.

'(a) With regard to the first, it seems probable that the statement of our terms must go very much beyond what are our minimum aims, and would therefore provide material for the militarists in Germany.

'(b) As to the second, the Governments of the Allies would have difficulty with public opinion in each country if they consented to a conference without previously obtaining public assurances from Germany on the main points.

'(c) This would not commit the Allies, in the face of the enemy, to what they might never secure, while at the same time it would meet the necessity of satisfying American opinion. Even if our demands were to leak out in Washington, they could not be reported in Germany as official facts, and would not

belligerents to announce their views as to the terms on which the War might be concluded. Their objects, as stated by themselves, were virtually the same. He proposed that 'soundings be taken'. (G. P. Gooch, *History of Europe*, p. 611).

therefore furnish material to the German Jingoës. Though it would be regarded as derogatory to negotiate with Germany, national pride would not be injured in the same way by communications with a neutral State which is not only the most powerful, but is Anglo-Saxon in language and in ideas. The public would be satisfied by an announcement that the terms had been confidentially given to President Wilson as evidence of our determination to secure our ends, even at the cost of indefinite prolongation of the war. It could be suggested that the terms would prove to him the futility of direct negotiation, because they would not be compatible with the aims of Germany.

‘In point of fact the danger that the President would endeavour to lead us towards compromise would be precluded, not only by his well-known sympathy with England and France, but also by the fact that he is publicly committed through his speech of 27 May 1916 to our main objects.¹ In that speech, though he dealt chiefly with the matter of securing future stability by international arrangements, in which America would join, for guaranteeing the settlement, he dwelt on other principles to which America is devoted, namely, the defeat of aggression and the rights of nationalities.

‘It has long been considered in America that her friendly neutrality might be utilized by the Allies to avoid the dangers of negotiation. It was seen that both Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Asquith had spoken of peace at the earliest possible moment, but it was also seen that the Allies objected to negotiation on various grounds. For this reason the idea that America might offer mediation conditionally upon the acceptance by the Central Powers of certain fundamental terms has been much discussed. If the President were willing to state conditions in such a way that the Allies were satisfied that his objects were in harmony with theirs, they would incur no risk in informing him of their aims.

‘One is strongly impressed in America by the fact that American views of the settlement are absolutely at one with those of the Allies in regard to the necessity of defeating aggression, the restoration of small States, and guarantees of stability.

¹ President Wilson was, as we now know, privately committed also, see p. 129.

‘The desire to see militarism discredited and overthrown is intense. Americans have closely studied the internal situation in Germany and are convinced that there is now a secure prospect of constitutional reform, but that this would be diminished by national exhaustion. Responsible Americans who have lately been in Berlin are convinced that the influential section led by Delbrueck, who is now in favour of constitutional reform and international peace machinery (although before the war he was an opponent of both), would inevitably induce the Government to desire to moderate terms, and to adopt reform after the war, provided that the Allies do not carry out a policy of humiliation and subsequent strangulation.’

Mr. Buxton also organized a private Memorial urging upon the Government serious consideration of the German offer. It read:

‘The undersigned desire to urge that the offer of negotiation by the enemy Governments should not be contemptuously rejected by the Allies.

‘It is recognized by the great majority of the Press that the question at issue is really one of terms, and not one of military victory regarded as an end in itself.

‘Whatever the terms put forward at first by the enemy Governments, it is highly probable that they would ultimately make far greater concessions, rather than continue the War.

‘An armistice is not involved in the present suggestion, and if our own terms cannot be obtained, the Government are not committed to accepting the terms offered.

‘We cannot contemplate without alarm the unfavourable change in neutral opinion towards this country which would undoubtedly take place if the Allies refused even to discuss the question of peace terms.’

In a speech in the House of Commons on 21 December, Mr. Buxton, who alone alluded to the subject on this occasion, covered pretty much the same ground. These views found little favour among those in authority. The comments of Lord Crewe, a member of the Cabinet, are remarkable as showing how mediation in time of war is regarded as an unneutral move, as an interference

which belligerents must resent; as an attempt to arbitrate between the belligerents and dictate a settlement.

Crewe House,
Curzon Street, W.

2nd January, 1917.

'My dear Buxton,

I am very glad to have the notes on the Allies and America, which you were good enough to send me on 29 December. I see you have communicated their substance to the Press in a letter.

It is curious that the President did not see that the issue of his invitation, almost on the top of the German announcement, made it almost inevitable that the two should be regarded as possessing a close connexion, although he quite truly stated that such was not the case. Of course the result was to produce an undue prejudice against his intervention, and to cause it to be regarded as a scarcely veiled attempt at actual mediation.

I see considerable difficulty even in a private communication to the American Government of the joint terms expected by the Allies, whether the maximum be set out or the minimum. To state the maximum obtainable by a complete victory might appear arrogant, if not actually grasping; while the minimum would involve a long preliminary discussion between the different Allies to decide by whom the sacrifice of what each regards as a just individual claim should be made. There would be some danger too, of starting a long argumentative discussion on the justice of this or that particular demand, going deeply into historical and ethnological considerations, and not far removed from the submission of our case to arbitration. I speak without any particular knowledge, but I question whether, at this stage, the Allies are likely to make such a communication.

Yours very sincerely,
(Sgd.) CREWE.'

Lord Loreborn¹ was among the few who 'very much deplored the attitude of the Government in repelling all proposals for intervention in a friendly way'. 'It is always right to hear what a friend has to say', he wrote to Mr. Buxton:

'I fancy that the main difficulty is the variety of ambitions

¹ Former Lord Chancellor.

among our Allies and the fact that our late hopeless Ministers [probably the pre-Coalition Ministry] may have bound themselves to our Allies to support those ambitions in arms.¹ They have made a fearful mess of it and now we are reaping the fruits of their perorations and their want of firmness in common foresight in the delicate business of Allied operations. I would say: (1) Take stock with our Allies in the friendliest way, (2) Tell America that we want so and so in common concert with them, (3) Get them to see that we ought all to aim at what is attainable not at what we would wish to be attainable. My impression is that many neutrals are behind President Wilson, and that in no circumstances ought we to estrange the U.S.A.’

The Allies declined to make use of President Wilson’s offer to take soundings with a view to testing the sincerity of the German peace proposal. In a joint note, issued on December 30, they unceremoniously rejected the offer of the Central Powers,² describing the German *démarche* as ‘empty and insincere’, designed ‘to create dissension in Allied countries’.

So rash a reply might have been excusable if no opportunity had been afforded to ascertain what lay behind Germany’s proposal. In the face of President Wilson’s offer, the reply was an act of folly. It immediately placed the German nation behind the extremist party. The German Government took its fatal decision to embark upon the U-Boat submarine policy of sinking merchant ships at sight, and fixed the date (1 February 1917) upon which submarine commanders were to begin operations. From this policy the German Government hitherto had shrunk.

The precipitate action of the Allies was all the more reprehensible in so far as President Wilson advocated a settlement favourable to them: the President had authorized Colonel House, as early as February 1916, to leave with Sir Edward Grey a memorandum in which

¹ See Treaty of London, 1915, p. 112.

² G. P. Gooch, *History of Europe*, p. 610.

the President undertook, if a conference were convened, to secure terms not unfavourable to the Allies, and if it failed to secure peace, the United States would probably leave the conference as an Allied belligerent.

The Memorandum records Colonel House's opinion decidedly favouring terms which provided for the restoration of Belgium, the transfer of Alsace-Lorraine to France, and the acquisition by Russia of an outlet to the sea, though he thought that the loss of territory incurred by Germany in one place would have to be compensated by concessions to her in other places outside Europe.¹

Sir Edward Grey deals at length in his memoirs, *Twenty-Five Years*, with his handling of the Memorandum. The War Committee were early informed of the proposal, and thought that the time had not come to discuss peace. Grey dallied with the document for nine or ten months, at the end of which he decided that the Cabinet should be informed, if an unforeseen contingency should require it. His intention was defeated by his dilatoriness. The Government fell in December 1916. Grey attached such importance to the document that, as he states, 'my last act was to put my successor in possession of the House Memorandum, and the paper I had intended to send with it to the Cabinet, in case the course of events should make it desirable for the new Government to consider them'.¹

The Americans were indeed aware in the summer of 1916 of the terms upon which Germany at that time was prepared to make peace. Mr. Buxton had been told in August 1916 by an 'authority', who was none other in fact than Colonel House himself—what those terms were: 'The complete abandonment without exception of Germany's claim to retain the land she had conquered, including the restoration of Serbia, the

¹ Lord Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years*, vol. ii, pp. 123-32.

severance of the corridor to the East, and the guarantee of access to the sea to Serbia, the acquisition by Italy of the Trentino, and, above all, the absolute restoration of the territory and sovereignty of Belgium.' Germany would have retained no right whatever to Antwerp, but would have given Belgium an indemnity for her losses. In regard to France, not only the restoration of her territory, but a large part of French Lorraine, and in particular the fortress of Metz, would have been ceded. Russia would have secured the use of the Straits by international control, which America would be prepared to guarantee. Whether Colonel House's information was correct in every particular or not, we are justified in assuming that, in proposing to take soundings, President Wilson entertained confident hopes of achieving aims which favoured the Allied cause.

The response of the Allied Governments could not have been more recklessly conceived. Had the handful of men directing the conflict lost all sense of proportion not to speak of humanity? For two long years, generations of men, the flower of the manhood of the most educated countries in the world, had faced one another in a death struggle along hundreds of miles of frontiers from sea to sea—a vast scene of the most wasteful, senseless, and scientifically organized slaughter known to history. So vast a horror that few civilian minds could behold and comprehend it. The unmerciful bluntness of ordinary minds caused the spectacle to be emptied of its content, and substituted for it the cruel abstractions of moving lines and salients on a map.

The people gave full support to their rulers: the rejection of the offer of peace, without the interposition of a moment's delay to examine it under the proposed safeguards, met with the enraged approval of the civilian public. In the coolness and sanity of peace, it can be said that no offer could have been explored with

less risk to the Allied cause. If acceptance of the offer resulted in the holding of a conference with or without an armistice, the advantage would lie with the Allies. There was, to begin with, President Wilson's promise¹ to leave the conference as a belligerent, on the side of the Allies, if Germany refused the terms of peace. As along the entire front except on sea where the Allies were supreme, a deadlock seemingly endless had been reached, a halt to the fighting could not have interfered with future strategy. At the end of 1916, moreover, Germany's prospects had sunk low. She had lost all her colonies. After the terrible hammering on the Somme front, her troops, in spite of the collapse of Roumania, had lost the confident will to victory: on all fronts the Central Powers were held as in a vice. Long years afterwards, in a remarkable speech to the French Academy in 1932, General Weygand stated that Joffre's generalship had compelled the Germans to sue for peace in 1916. Ludendorff was turning anxious eyes to the Eastern front where the Russians were being rapidly equipped with superior armament, and reformed into well-disciplined and smaller formations: a breathing space to Russia would have been of incalculable worth and might have prevented later in the new year its disastrous collapse. Privation and gloom weighed down the German people.

On 22 January President Wilson made the famous speech to the Senate in which occurred the phrase 'peace without victory'—a phrase that provoked a great deal of unjustifiable resentment. By this he meant a peace of understanding, guaranteeing a democratic settlement in which national aspirations would find full satisfaction—a peace which, as Lord Grey states in his Memoirs, for German militarism would have meant signal defeat. To quote his words: 'The terms

¹ A promise pressed upon the Allies repeatedly throughout 1916, see *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, vol. ii, chap. ix.

were such as must have demonstrated the stultification and failure of Prussian militarism.’¹

Would Germany accept an offer of mediation subject to such conditions? It seemed so. On 29 January, the moderate Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, authorized the German Ambassador, Count Bernstorff, to tell the President that Germany would accept the offer, but ‘could not publicly announce the terms we had in mind in making the offer of 12 December after the Entente reply, for they would look like weakness’. Dr. Gooch declares that his terms ‘sent for the private information of the President, included restitution to France of the part of Alsace occupied by her; the acquisition of a strategical and economic frontier separating Germany and Poland from Russia: the restitution of colonial conquests; the restoration of occupied France . . . the restitution of Belgium under guarantees for the safety of Germany. . . .’

These were views under which, as Count Bernstorff officially informed Colonel House (31 January 1917), ‘we [the Germans] would have been prepared to enter into negotiations, if our enemies had accepted our offer of 12 December’. And Bethmann-Hollweg, in the opinion of his coadjutor, Helferrich,² (‘the father of the peace offer’), could not have rejected a restoration peace, had it been proposed by the Allies, whatever hopes the German Military Command placed in an unrestricted submarine blockade. As we have seen, the Allies had banged the door on 30 December, and Balfour had later sent a violent explanatory Note to Washington arguing the case for conquests at the expense of a Power ‘consumed with the lust of domination’. On 10 January the Allies made public their terms, indicating a Carthaginian fate for the Central Powers. Under these circumstances, the German Command were only too glad to

¹ Lord Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years*, vol. ii, p. 132.

² See Helferrich, *Der Welt Krieg*, vol. i.

reject Wilson's renewed attempt to negotiate later in pursuance of his 'peace without victory' speech to the Senate on the 22 January. Clearly, therefore, the Allies bear the greater responsibility for the disastrous bungling of the chances of an honourable peace in 1916-17.

Lord Grey shows courage in facing the question. In his memoirs he evidently feels uneasy. Though he believes that the German terms were unacceptable, he wonders whether the Allies had also made a mistake. His reflections are disquieting:

'If a Wilson peace in 1916 had brought real disillusionment about militarism, it would have been far better than what actually happened.

'Two years of war, in which expenditure of life and national strength and treasure were at their maximum, would have been avoided. European markets and trade might have recovered quickly, for the impoverishment and exhaustion would have been much less. The future peace of Europe, with the unsevered co-operation of the United States, might have been safer than it is to-day. Prosperity and security might be to-day more fair in prospect for us all than the victory of 1918 and the treaties of 1919 have made them; and there would have been a peace with no noxious secret ideas of *revanche*' (*Twenty-Five Years*, p. 132).

These words were written before the unparalleled economic collapse into which the entire world finally plunged in 1929, and which after three years of worsening conditions threatened civilization itself.

It is probable that, had the Asquith Government remained in office, the reply of the Allies would have been more conciliatory, and might have led to an honourable peace. A terrible responsibility lay on the Members of the Lloyd George Government. They acted hastily within a fortnight or three weeks of their acceptance of office. Were they aware of the House Memorandum¹ which Sir Edward Grey, on quitting

¹ See p. 129.

the Foreign Office, handed to his successor, Mr. Balfour? The question is a crucial one. If the answer is No, the change of Government occurring at this time must be judged to be a disaster of the first magnitude. If the answer is Yes, one can only despair of statesmanship.

The summary refusal of the Allies caused Germany, as we have seen, to make a last desperate gambler's throw and, with the madness of a quarry at bay, to stake all on the U-Boat policy. The decision put a swift end to President Wilson's efforts for peace, brought America into the war, and the ruinous struggle was now to continue for two more pitiless years.

It is said that the nations of Europe 'blundered and staggered'¹ into the war in 1914. They equally blundered and staggered into its continuation for another two years in 1916, an additional two years, which wellnigh brought about the ruin of Britain, on whom the brunt of the fighting was henceforth to fall, and who has now to do the bulk of the paying. It is galling to reflect that particular commitments of the Allies, Russia's claim to Constantinople, Italy's to Dalmatia, and so forth, impractical as they were, and vain as they have proved to be, were factors which contributed to the Allies' refusal. Historians of another century will no doubt regard the continuation of the war as a criminal folly, reflecting the impotence of rulers to control the monstrous forces which they had set in motion; not the least of these were the primitive passions which the war aroused and which held reason at bay even in the highest quarters.

¹ Mr. Lloyd George.

CHAPTER V

CONQUEST OR SETTLEMENT: THE LAST TWO YEARS

WAR AIMS VERSUS PEACE AIMS

THE failure of President Wilson's attempts at mediation and his final decision to declare war on Germany encouraged rather than daunted those who were working for an early and lasting settlement. The overwhelming horror of the war gave them no rest; whatever the obstacles, and however impossible seemed the task, they persisted doggedly in their efforts. The most determined among the members of Parliament was undoubtedly Mr. Philip Snowden, whose pertinacity in later years, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, aroused the admiration of his country. Nothing could equal the formidable directness of his attacks, and the passionate humanity which inspired his conduct.

Outside Parliament the activities of the group were focused by a society, called the Union of Democratic Control, set up to promote peace by negotiation on the basis of a settlement just to all the belligerents. The most prominent and energetic of the members included Mr. Philip Snowden, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, Mr. Charles Trevelyan, Mr. Charles Roden Buxton, the late E. D. Morel, all of whom were roughly handled by the daily press, Morel being the target for the most virulent attacks. His half-French origin gave a passion and a dangerous clarity to his speeches and writings; he felt himself compelled to analyse and proclaim in the middle of a great war the causes that had led to it—causes which showed that no single belligerent was solely responsible for the conflict—such an analysis as in these days of peace can be found in any responsible history. In seeking to adjust the

balance of right thinking, he seemed to overstress the faults of his own country; in exposing the responsibilities of the Allies, Russia in particular, he appeared to the popular mind to excuse the part played by Germany. But the hostility of the press and the nervousness of the Government in the face of such a discussion were based on the knowledge that acceptance of these ideas would dry up war passion and show the futility of a struggle to a knock-out.

Meetings held by this group met with varying success in different parts of the country. Its influence, reinforced by the Independent Labour Party—at that time ably led by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Philip Snowden—was potent in the industrial and working class areas, namely in the Midlands, South Wales, Lancashire, and Yorkshire, the North of England, and parts of Scotland. It is largely due to their activities that the broad lines of British foreign policy have become the constant concern of the British democracy to-day. To an overwhelming degree they account for the rapid rise of the Labour Party in the years immediately following the War, and for the decline of the Liberal Party whose leaders were looked upon as having involved the country in the War.¹ In their insistence on the evils of secret diplomacy and on the necessity of some form of democratic control of the Foreign Office, regarded as having committed the country to war without the knowledge and consent of the British people, these forces created that massive and insistent opinion in Britain which made inevitable the acceptance of President Wilson's ideas of open covenants

¹ The Labour Party's official record during the war did not differ in essentials from that of the Liberal Party. But such was the prestige gained by Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Snowden that their assumption of the leadership after the war identified the Party with their work, and accordingly it rapidly advanced to power on the tide of general disillusionment that marked the post war years.

openly arrived at, and of international co-operation superseding the ruinous policy of sectional alliances.

Mr. Buxton did not belong to this group, or wholly share their views. He proved, however, to be a useful ally, though working in less tumultuous scenes in the ante-rooms of Ministers, so to speak. He did not believe that any effective purpose was served by opposing the continuation of the war. Such an attitude could have, he felt, no effect on events: on the other hand, if the Government could show that Allied aims were moderately conceived, the coming of peace might be hastened. And the Government would listen to discussions of war aims, whilst it would turn a deaf and scornful ear to appeals to negotiate peace. To the promotion, therefore, of what he called a 'rational peace movement', Mr. Buxton, together with Colonel Wedgwood, Lord Parmoor, and others, devoted himself from 1917 onwards.

He appropriated the language of the military school as more befitting the aims and feelings of his group—and also as a means of getting a hearing. He worked for 'a decisive settlement', that is to say, decisive in the sense of lasting and effective, which a decision on the field would not necessarily secure: to promote 'a decisive settlement' it was necessary to 'prosecute the war vigorously on the diplomatic front'.

The activities of these M.P.'s were in marked contrast with the attitude of Lord Morley, who never emerged from his seclusion at Wimbledon because he felt that all rational effort was futile 'at a time when men had abandoned themselves to the insanity of war'.

The year 1917 opened with the Allied statement of their peace terms¹ published to the world, in response to President Wilson's invitation that 'soundings be taken'.

¹ In addition to the restoration of invaded countries, the Allied terms included: 'the restitution of provinces formerly torn from the Allies by force or against the wish of their inhabitants; the liberation

As we have seen earlier, Mr. Buxton had urged, for very good reasons, that the terms should be communicated to President Wilson privately. The President wanted to take soundings, and not to invite a defiant programme; a public announcement might do more harm than good if the terms were too high.

To a criticism of Allied War aims, the group of M.P.'s applied themselves during the next twelve months. Mr. Buxton's attitude was indeed consistent with the view he took before the War, when he argued in favour of a policy of give and take, of changing the *status quo* by pacific means in such a way as to satisfy the just claims of all countries. Now, during the struggle, he set himself virtually the same task, but under almost impossible conditions. He was in sympathy with the theory expressed by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, namely, that the war should be regarded as an instrument of diplomacy aimed at bringing about a lasting settlement, and should not be regarded as a gladiatorial combat resulting in spoils to the victors.

The entry of the United States under the leadership of President Wilson into the War on the side of the Allies made this task less onerous than it would otherwise have been. Critics could now develop their attacks against a policy of conquest behind a barricade of Wilsonian principles to which everybody was compelled to pay lip service.

A notable success was the holding of a public meeting at the Central Hall, Westminster, in March 1917, at which for the first time since the outbreak of war, a responsible public discussion of aims was conducted in

of the Italians, as also of the Slavs, Roumanians and Czecho-Slovaks from foreign domination; the setting free of the populations subject to the bloody tyranny of the Turks; and the turning out of Europe of the Ottoman Empire as decidedly foreign to western civilization. The intentions of the Tsar in regard to Poland have been indicated by his manifesto to his armies' (Gooch, *op. cit.*, p. 613).

the capital of a belligerent. The meeting created a momentary stir in Government circles, for it furnished Mr. Buxton with the occasion to reveal to the public the terms according to which Germany, in the view of his American informants, was prepared some months earlier to make peace. In the opinion of the weekly *Nation*, the meeting marked the turning-point in the movement of opinion. Henceforward the Government had to reckon with an increasing volume of critical discussion, which was later to culminate in Lord Lansdowne's public appeal to the nation for a reasonable policy and for taking stock of the position.

Lord Parmoor presided, and Mr. Buxton was followed by Sir Edwin Pears, the Constantinople correspondent of the *Daily News*, and Mr. H. B. Lees-Smith, M.P. The latter came fresh from the trenches, where he served as a private, and it was the soldier who was greeted with an ovation when he declared the soldier's view—namely, that it would be a crime to continue the war in the pursuit of punishment—a policy which Mr. Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, had approved, in the language of the boxing-ring, as a 'knock-out'.

In his speech, Mr. Buxton referred to the set of terms which, as mentioned on a previous page, was thought to be obtainable from the Central Powers. He remarked:

'If terms such as these are accessible, they ought to be ascertained at the earliest possible moment. If they are attainable, why are we still fighting? Why is the truth concealed? It is because there is another class of opinion—because there are extremists—I think that is the best word—who are the dominant force in politics and the Press? Why are they the dominant force? Because the tendency is to be extreme in war time. We all fear to say anything which might chill feeling in the Army, and which might possibly encourage the enemy, or which might perhaps be held to endanger the party truce. But the opinion of the Army is precisely what we want to urge to-night. I am astonished at the amount of opinion in that direction that I have found, in officers principally of high rank, in the last few months.

In regard to encouraging the enemy, we are always forgetting that when quotations of moderate British views are reproduced in the enemy Press, they are produced by the moderate elements in Germany, who use them to modify and control the policy of their own country in the very direction that is desirable.

‘The sense of punishing is attractive, but if the price of punishment is to fall, not on us, but on the boys whom we send to the front, what right have we to think of anything but the coldest, most calculating, most reasonable view, of what will be decisive, and what is really efficient in the conduct of war diplomacy? We must face sacrifice for decisive ends, and we ought to believe, I think, in making the sacrifices necessary for those ends. But to try to humiliate, by trampling on its legitimate aspirations, as well as its lust for power, a proud and efficient people is not statesmanship; it is insanity. It is the same childish folly which lost America, which nearly lost South Africa, which thought that, after we had snubbed the Germans in 1911 over Agadir, they would never fight us, and which has brought the Empire into a dangerous crisis by the mismanagement of Ireland.’

The interpretation given by the Germans to the Allied statement justified those British members of Parliament who had criticized its tone and substance. One aim followed another in the increasing list of commitments undertaken by the Allies, and now the latest addition, for which the long-suffering French and British peoples were called upon to give lives and treasure, was to include ‘the liberation of the Italians, as also of the Slavs, Roumanians, and Czecho-Slovaks from foreign domination’.

The rescue of Belgium had ceased to be one of the main conditions of peace, nothing short of the complete destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire seemed to be necessary before peace could be thought of.

‘Had England entered the war for this purpose?’ Mr. Buxton asked in a speech in the House of Commons. ‘Was she prepared to sacrifice another 500,000 lives to ensure the complete independence of the Czech and

Slovaks? Autonomy for the Slav peoples within the Austrian Empire might be immediately realizable, to stand out for independence would prolong the struggle. The British people should at least know what they were being asked to do.'

On this question he crossed swords with Professor Masaryk, now the greatly respected President of Czecho-Slovakia.

The *New Statesman* in an editorial note supported Professor Masaryk's views and bitterly attacked Mr. Buxton; the latter vigorously replied and his letter drew from Lord Courtney the following comment:

'Excuse a word, only a word, to say how much I have been pleased with your letter in the *New Statesman*.

'It is most refreshing.

'The directness and vigour of your onslaught on the poor editor almost left me pitying him, but his very characteristic note on your letter took away all this feeling of compunction. He does not always get, however, so complete a punishment as you have inflicted. More power to your elbow!'

In the House of Commons Mr. Buxton made a series of speeches, each being devoted to one of the items of the Allied programme, and on each occasion he enlarged upon the tactical advantages to the Allies of a statement of reasonable war aims.

Dealing with the question of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he made a reasoned case for retaining it on a federal basis. He showed that the problem of uniting the Slav groups into national entities was far from being a simple one, as the protagonists of independence appeared to contend. He described his experiences at Agram (Zagreb) before the war, when he saw evidence of the little love that prevailed between Croats and Slovenes and Serbs, the former two groups being Western in outlook, religion, and civilization, the latter Eastern and less developed, differences which made themselves acutely felt even at a time which could not

be more favourable for uniting them in one common purpose. The difficulties felt by the present-day Yugo-Slavia show that there was substance in these reflections. His proposal afforded autonomy to the various Slav peoples within the Austrian Empire; Bohemia, Slovakia, Transylvania, Croatia, and Slovenia, were, for instance, to be federal provinces, each with a local Diet. Under such conditions, Mr. Buxton felt that there would be little to choose between complete independence and autonomy, and that it would be folly to prolong the war and sacrifice British lives for something which would, at best, mean little more to the populations concerned, and, at worst, might create more misery than contentment.

Mr. Buxton proceeded to point out the probable effects of such a policy (24 July 1917, House of Commons):

‘A congeries of small States, like the Balkan States, is not an attractive proposition. A number of small States with sovereignty and power and temptations to war is not the most suitable system that you can devise. It has grave economic disadvantages. It would admit of intrigue from the more powerful State. . . . Again, let us remember that the creation of a number of independent States would mean also the creation of several Ulsters, strongly supported from outside, and none with a guarantee against persecution.’

He hinted at the real forces which lay behind such a policy—a French hegemony to establish French security.

‘We talk of establishing a barrier . . . by bringing a powerful State of ten millions across the German path. A State of that kind would not be a great State, and it would not be a State even with a homogeneous population. Surely, however big you made that State [the reference was to Yugo-Slavia], it would be no use as a barrier, unless it were financed and militarily organized by the Great Power outside which desired to obstruct the German plans. Heaven help us, if the only security in the future is to be reliance on strategical military force of that kind.’

He pointed out that the British Government's avowed belief in the future League of Nations was clearly inconsistent with the application of strategical requirements to such vital questions as destroying a State or setting up new ones.

'Who can prove that the disappearance of Austria [Empire] . . .', he concluded, 'would conduce to our safety? We want to be very certain on that point before embarking on so costly an enterprise. There is no certainty at all that the gain held out to us is anything but problematical in the highest degree. . . . When we examine the proposal in its true light . . . we will see that it is one which is on the practical score mistaken, and which is mistaken even as to the potential unity of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in a single State . . . a sublime dedication of our young men for the purpose of creating a large and quite artificial new State which might or might not be a barrier to the German corridor.'

These words have proved to be strangely and unhappily prophetic.

Mr. Buxton's efforts were also directed to mitigating the obstinacy of the claim for the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine. Great Britain had not declared war, he contended, in order to attain this purpose, nor was British opinion prepared to support its continuation until it had been attained.

Speaking on 30 July 1917, in the House of Commons, he attacked the Government spokesman for stating that 'it will be for the French to say what they desire there, and for this country to back up the French in what they desire'. 'If such a principle applied all round (to all the Allies)', exclaimed Mr. Buxton, 'then we are committed to the wildest dreams of the Chauvinists of each country.'

He insisted that the Alsace-Lorraine question was not a question that should be settled by reference to French Chauvinism alone. French opinion of all kinds, and not of one school alone, should be taken into

account. People tended far too much to regard a country as a single entity, and not as a collection of widely differing groups of people holding different views, and in France there was a strong party opposed to the fulfilment of the policy of 'Revanche'. If Alsace-Lorraine was to go back to France *sans phrase*, it would appear that the world had learnt nothing since the days of Louis XIV, a compromise surely was the thing (30 July 1917).

The persistence of the various groups in urging the Government to make the fullest use of diplomacy as a means of winning the war might have been redoubled had they known that, in fact, the Allied Governments were, throughout the spring and summer of 1917, busily engaged in negotiating with Austria through the medium of Prince Sixte. Reading the documents to-day, when we can be wise after the event, we see clearly that the Austrian Court had a far surer idea of the position of the Central Powers relative to the Allies than had Germany. The Court was convinced that the war could not be won, saw in an immediate peace the sole chance of saving the Empire, and for this purpose was prepared, if need be, to make a separate peace without her Ally. The story is vividly told in Dr. G. P. Gooch's history.¹ There were frequent consultations between Mr. Lloyd George and M. Briand. Their efforts might have been crowned with success had it not been for Italy. Sonnino, the Italian Prime Minister, stuck to the Italian claims established by the secret treaty of 1915,² whereby Italy was promised North Dalmatia, Trieste, and the Trentino, and a number of islands. While Austria was willing to concede Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia, and an outlet to the Adriatic, and to endorse the creation of a Yugo-Slav State, she would not willingly give up most of the territory that

¹ See G. P. Gooch, *History of Europe*, pp. 625 et seq.

² See p. 112.

Italy demanded. Italy was indeed proving to be more of a liability than an asset: a liability due not only to her impossible territorial claims, but also to her fighting weakness, for, a few weeks later in 1917, she was to sustain overwhelming defeat at Caporetto. In the meantime the negotiations between Austria and the Allies, delayed and protracted, were brought to an end by vigorous diplomatic action taken by Germany to bring her chief Ally to heel.

During the spring and summer of 1917, the activities of the moderate parties in Britain acquired greater significance; they reacted on the moderates in Germany, who began to make their voice heard and gain notable adherents. The famous Reichstag resolution (19 July) introduced by Erzberger declared for 'a peace of understanding and the permanent reconciliation of the peoples'.

'With such a peace', he said, 'forced acquisition of territory, and political, economic, or financial oppressions are inconsistent. It also rejects all schemes which aim at economic barriers after the war. The freedom of the seas must be made secure. So long, however, as the enemy Governments threaten Germany and her Allies with conquests and oppression, the German nation will fight till its own and its Allies' right to life and development is secured.'

A notable attempt was made by the peace group in the House of Commons on the 26th July 1917 to obtain from the Government an encouraging response to this opinion, so as to strengthen and encourage the moderate forces in Germany. Eloquent and moving speeches were made by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Charles Trevelyan in reference to the motion in their names committing the Government to similar principles. They were supported by a courageous speech delivered by Mr. Philip Snowden replying to Mr. Bonar Law, the Leader of the House, who, on behalf of the Government, refused to make any kind of sympathetic approach

to the pronouncement of the German popular will. The cumulative effect of Mr. Snowden's arguments against the policy of a war of attrition wrung a cry from his heart at the close of his speech—'With all the strength at my disposal, Mr. Speaker, I protest against such a policy as that. In the name of our common humanity I say it is criminal, I say it is scandalous, and I will raise my voice against it. I say in the name of humanity we must stop this war now.'

Soon came the great efforts of the Pope to end 'the useless massacre'. After taking soundings, the Pope put forward concrete proposals favouring, in effect, the *status quo ante bellum*. 'Listen then to our prayer; accept the paternal invitation which we address to you in the name of the Prince of Peace.' But President Wilson, who as a neutral had similarly stood out for a peace without victory, as a belligerent was the first to reject the Pope's offer of mediation; Great Britain, giving way to France's anxiety, made a chilling response.

Thereupon the German Government attempted to place peace feelers in London and Paris, and M. Briand was informed that the Kaiser was disposed to peace. The Allies conferred and decided that an attempt was being made to separate them. Once again they declined to exploit the opportunity. The war must go on. Another fifteen months of horror, carnage, and squalor.

The Lansdowne Letter.

The defeat of Italy at Caporetto, and the gradual collapse of Russia, followed by the Bolshevik Revolution in October, and her determination to conclude peace brightened the prospects of the enemy. It looked once again as if victory might come within its grasp before America could fling her limitless hosts into the struggle. Mr. Asquith's assertion that the return of Alsace-Lorraine was as necessary as the liberation of Belgium was worth an army corps to the Germans. It was

followed by Kühlmann's defiant 'No, never'. Such were the circumstances under which the various parties of moderation continued their efforts in the autumn of 1917. This campaign, pursued for so many months, was to result in a notable success at this juncture, in spite of the increasing difficulties of their position. By these activities the public was prepared for Lord Lansdowne's startling intervention. As a distinguished ex-Foreign Secretary of a Conservative Government, and a member of the Cabinet from 1915-16, Lord Lansdowne could not easily be ignored. The publication of his famous letter created a great stir. It pointed out that the prolongation of the war would spell ruin for the civilized world, and asserted that an increased stimulus would be given to the peace movement in Germany if British war aims were revised.

Lord Lansdowne's action gave occasion for the organization of another movement, ably led by Mr. Francis Hirst, the Editor until 1915 of the *Economist*, who, with the help of Sir Hugh Bell, Mr. Richard Holt, Mr. Molteno, and other influential Liberals, had started a new weekly, *Common Sense*, in which his views found a more congenial place. This group brought fresh reinforcements to the rational parties,—City men, industrial magnates, financiers, bankers (including a Governor of the Bank of England), law Lords, and a few leading peers. The conclusion of Lord Lansdowne's letter summarized the ideas held in common by the various groups.

'What will be the value', he wrote, 'of the blessings of peace to nations so exhausted that they can scarcely stretch out a hand with which to grasp them? He had no doubt that a desire for peace prevailed extensively in Germany, Austria, and Turkey, and that the German Government had been able to strengthen its military position by representing, "probably with success", that the aims of the Allies included the "destruction of Germany, the imposition upon her of a form of government decided

by her enemies, her destruction as a great commercial community, and her exclusion from the free use of the seas". An immense stimulus would be given to the peace party in Germany if it were understood:

(1) That we do not desire the annihilation of Germany as a Great Power;

(2) That we do not seek to impose upon her people any form of government other than that of their own choice;

(3) That, except as a legitimate war measure, we have no desire to deny to Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world;

(4) That we are prepared, when the war is over, to examine in concert with other Powers the group of international problems, some of them of recent origin, which are concerned with the question of the "freedom of the seas";

(5) That we are prepared to enter into an international pact under which ample opportunities would be afforded for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.'

The letter was not supported publicly either by Mr. Asquith or by Sir Edward Grey. The Northcliffe Press, which then included *The Times*, behaved in character by at once bespattering Lord Lansdowne with abuse; but a large number of independent journals and provincial newspapers in all parts of the United Kingdom gave general or qualified support, which was later to affect the views of the Government.

In Parliament, members representing these groups were able to renew their efforts with greater confidence; and Mr. Buxton, amongst others, did not let slip his opportunity to underline the views that were so rapidly gathering momentum.

'If we recall the wild aims in which we indulged in the early days of the war', he declared in the House of Commons, 19 December 1917, 'we see how opinion is verging now towards a restoration peace. It has moved quite a long way, and ultimately will move further. It has been driven largely by military facts, and, although that is rational enough, it is a thing I personally find no sympathy with, because it is on the ground of intrinsic

merits that an anti-annexationist and restoration settlement, in my opinion, ought to be advocated. I have in this House argued in detail the objections against Colonial annexation and against the dismemberment of Austria. But will the Government tell us what aims it is really attached to? Public opinion is not attached, and no one will say it is attached, to definite aims of annexation. The Jingo Press is already complaining that large sections of opinion are against such aims. For which of these aggressive aims is the Government holding out? If you are against a restoration peace you must ultimately be for some form of annexation, but we are not offered any argument for annexations anywhere. The real reason for resisting restoration aims is with some people a mere intuitive instinct, desiring to avenge our honour and dignity, while others hold the belief that without a dictated peace the future will not be secured. This is really the fundamental and important question—and I think the service Lord Lansdowne renders is in bringing that question much more under public discussion—the question of German psychology in the event of one kind of settlement or another.

. 'We are fighting for security. The idea of security based on the balance of material power through the crushing defeat of Germany does not really appeal to rational people. In fifty years, or even in twenty-five years, the grouping of the Powers will unquestionably change, probably not once, but more than once. To-day, too little thought, it seems to me, is given to this central question. Upon the answer to it is based our decision to continue the War rather than to seek a restoration peace, which probably has been obtainable if we definitely sought it at two or three different periods in the last two years.

'If the Allies had co-ordinated their diplomacy and from the first had aimed their policy at security, giving their best, cool judgement to the real welfare of the future, they would have attained their ends, because the restoration of peace has been probably accessible at several periods, and is probably accessible, if persistently pursued, in the not distant future. Their policy has been the cause of the disasters which have come with the prolongation of the War. If it be true that a restoration peace would have been the best basis of settlement, and that it might have been attained two years ago, what then are we to think of

the disasters which have occurred to Serbia, Roumania, Russia, and Italy, not to speak of the general exhaustion?

‘If we can obtain a humiliating settlement it would not be worth the cost; it would not give us such good security. If, then, restoration is available, it is surely at least a part of sanity to consider the terms available, because simple restitution, upheld by the Prime Minister the other day, is our object.’

Shortly after the publication of the Lansdowne letter, General Smuts was sent to Switzerland to meet Count Mensdorff, formerly Austrian Ambassador in London, and to urge Austria to a separate peace.¹ Mr. Buxton’s notes of a talk with General Smuts about his task² are of interest.

‘Smuts opened out on Austria’, writes Mr. Buxton, ‘and the “knock-out” policy. “Damnably stupidity”, was his phrase. But he reflected that 90 per cent. of what happened was “Providence”, and that comforted him. Our 10 per cent. didn’t make the difference. Moreover we should remember that every one is partly mad, usually 30 per cent. The task was to detect everybody’s mad point.

‘The next subject was Lansdownism. The idea of moderate aims was sound. Asquith talked moderation in private. The trouble was that moderation might chill the Allies, and encourage generosity. The public was not ready for defeatism. It had been a sound plan to meet Mensdorff. To see Kühlmann would be different. Interviews could not be kept secret. The Mensdorff interview did not offend Italy. (I asked if it did not imply leaving Austria-Hungary intact and in possession of Trieste.) Not intact, he said, but it would be mad to cut off Austria from the sea, when we were even claiming a port for Poland. When I asked if detachment of Austria was possible, he said, she certainly knew that Germany was of no use to her for the future, and that she must rely on America and England.

¹ Mr. Balfour who had, during 1917, appeared to make a gesture in this direction, had subsequently, in reply to Mr. Buxton in the House, markedly banged the door.

² 17 March 1918.

'We were thwarting Wilson and weakening Czernin. A reputation abroad helped a continental minister, though not a British one. Wilson was an enigma, a genius, a philanthropist, a dark horse.'

Another question discussed with General Smuts was the possible detachment of Bulgaria.

Every one knew that public feeling in Bulgaria was with the Allies and the possibility of detaching her had been kept in view from the first. Among those who furnished information to Mr. Buxton, were J. D. Bouchier of *The Times*, who remained at Bucharest, and General Howell, chief of the staff at Salonica. That the problem was studied in the highest quarters is illustrated by the following letters from Lord Milner and General Sir William Robertson, but no effective action was taken.¹

'Many thanks for your letter and useful notes. I think the chances of a separate peace with Bulgaria are certainly somewhat improved by recent events. It would be foolish to underestimate the difficulties in the way, but it is well worth while considering on what terms such a peace *might* be concluded, if the chance offered.

Yours very truly,
(Sgd.) MILNER.'

I. 4. 17.

'Many thanks for your letter of the 13th instant and the Note enclosed with it. It is months and will soon be years since I was first impressed with the importance of detaching some of the enemy countries, but as you are aware, with a large number of Allies to deal with, it is not easy to arrive at an agreement as to the best course to pursue, because you cannot detach any enemy country without disappointing one or more of the Allies in their original aspirations. Still, if we stop at difficulties we shall never achieve anything, and the question is whether all has been done that could have been done in the matter.

Yours truly,
(Sgd.) W. R. ROBERTSON.'

16 July 1917.

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¹ The far-reaching effects of Bulgaria's desertion in 1918 is a sufficient condemnation of Allied inaction in the previous year.

Mr. Buxton, as a Liberal M.P., felt that there was something disastrous in the fact that Liberalism represented by Mr. Asquith was abdicating its post—it was giving an indication of a view not distinct from that of reactionary extremists. Of those Liberal leaders who differed from this view, Mr. Buxton placed most reliance on Lord Buckmaster. In the following extract from one of his letters to Mr. Buxton he recognizes the danger of a humiliating settlement:

‘I agree as to the enormous importance of making the German people dissatisfied with, and resentful against, the Government that has brought this misery on the world. What I think is imperfectly recognized is this—that, although the War healed all differences in Germany, as it healed them here, yet there were when war broke out, two distinct parties having authority among the German people—the one, which succeeded, expressed the military power—the other, which failed, desired peaceful and civil development. It ought to be our object to make the latter party all powerful and to win to it those members of the other party, who, when the blindness caused by international quarrels has passed away, would be able to see the ruin which has been brought to their country and to the world by the policy they were led to support. My view is that, however difficult and however far-distant the realization of such a hope and object may be, it is none the less only by its realization that peace can ever be made lasting and secure. (It must never be forgotten that we are dealing with a people who, when the ravages of war have passed by, will still be a nation of about 65 millions, of whom perhaps 2 millions may be injured men. The 3 or 4 millions who will be killed or permanently crippled I have disregarded in forming my estimate of 65.) This people, whatever distress and suffering they may have undergone, will retain—nay, may even have strengthened—their natural characteristics of patience, industry, thrift, and determination to acquire and use all knowledge for the purpose of personal and national development. Let such a nation be governed by the class of people who have failed to prevent this War, and the future of Europe may be both safe and happy. Let it be a Nation infected and infiltrated through and through with a

desire to redeem by force of arms a great national humiliation, and Europe will continue to be one vast armed camp.'

The Lansdowne movement and the other moderate groups were to gain a signal success in January 1918, when the British Prime Minister felt obliged to set forth the aims of the Allies in a moderate and revised form. They must have been especially gratified to find that the policy which they had been urging with such persistence now accorded, in all its main particulars, with the declaration of His Majesty's Government. The members of the groups had emphasized in Parliament the inexpediency of aiming at the break-up of Austria-Hungary, and pleaded for an autonomous solution of its problem; Mr. Lloyd George now declared 'the break up of Austria-Hungary is no part of our war aims; but genuine self-government must be granted to those Austro-Hungarian nationalities who have long desired it'. His reference to Roumania was also vague: 'We also mean to press that justice be done to men of Roumanian blood and speech in their legitimate aspirations', but he definitely favoured the attribution of the Trentino to Italy. They again had protested against holding out for the integral restoration of Alsace Lorraine; Mr. Lloyd George now confined himself to asking for the reconsideration of the problem; they had also raised their voice against the expulsion of Turkey from Thrace and Constantinople as a war aim; Mr. Lloyd George's revised aim in regard to Turkey was a 'frank recantation'¹ of his declaration made twelve months before. 'We are not fighting to deprive Turkey of its capital, or of the rich renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace.'

Again, their reference to the German colonies left their future disposal an open question. The views of Mr. Buxton and others could not have obtained a more

¹ Dr. Gooch, *op. cit.*, p. 644.

complete vindication. If the Allies had agreed to make this declaration twelve months before, in place of the defiant statement, embodying maximum demands, which they actually made in response to President Wilson's offer of mediation, the war would most probably have ended in 1917. To have become reasonable when the military situation was unfavourable was to place oneself on a level with the gamblers of Germany's destinies, for the German Command, in its turn, was now in no mood to listen to reason. With criminal recklessness it braced itself for the final offensive, and swept Germany into irretrievable and final defeat.

For neither the revised aims nor the famous Fourteen Points laid down soon afterwards by President Wilson were able to avert the terrific onslaught in the West on which Germany now pinned her hopes.

In the spring of 1918 there was little that the adherents of the rational parties could do. England held its breath waiting for the supreme onset of the German hosts, reinforced from the Russian front, on the long battle line in the West.

In the lull before the storm the House of Commons gave two more of its sittings to the discussion of war aims, discussions, however, which necessarily assumed an academic air, for reason could have no place at a time when the destinies of nations were cast into the hazard of the greatest battle that the world has ever known.

In these two debates Mr. Buxton again made contributions emphasizing the value to our fighting men of an efficient rational diplomatic policy, arguing that the Wilsonian principles should be applied scientifically, self-determination, for example, requiring sacrifices not only from the Central Powers but also from the Allies; its application should not spell acquisition for the Allies, and ruin, humiliation, and loss to Germany; self-determination at the expense of one side must be

balanced by some *quid pro quo* which, in Germany's case, should relate to the colonial sphere, and he postulated an international administration for equatorial Africa under the authority of the Concert, 'call it a League of Nations if you like', in which a democratized Germany would play her part—a reference to General Smuts's ideas which later were to take shape in the mandate system.

Such views were chiefly relevant now to the making of the peace settlement. For in a few months the titanic struggle ended as suddenly as it began; the chain snapped at its weakest link, Bulgaria refused to continue the struggle and deserted her allies, Turkey followed, stripped of her entire Empire, with the enemy piercing her very heart, the Austro-Hungarian Empire simply ceased to exist, and proud Germany, mortally stricken at last, transformed by revolution, surrendered herself unconditionally to her foes. None of the Allied Commands expected so swift, complete, and overwhelming a victory.

Europe lay waiting for the mould of the Allied potters. Which of the potters would finally cast its shape—the avenger or the healer?

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

VERSAILLES.

THE Peace of Versailles marks the end of the epoch which it is proposed to consider. We have observed in the light of an instructive example the influence on British foreign policy in peace and in war of sections of public opinion interested in working for peace and for the welfare of subject nationalities.

It will be manifest that, in certain aspects at least, the immediate influence of the moderate groups on the course of events was far from being entirely negligible. The end of the Great War came suddenly. The overwhelming completeness of the Allied victory startled the world, but the credit for the result cannot entirely be given to the work of generals and soldiers in the field. It is true, of course, that force played the major part in the victory; the onslaught of the Allied armies freshened and revitalized by American reinforcements, coming forward in never-ending numbers, proved irresistible and brought the enemy to its knees. But it would be a grave mistake to ignore the important influence exerted by policy. Every one recognizes that the sudden collapse of the German army is explained in part by its loss of morale, due to the failing resolution and will of the German people. Contributing to this loss was undoubtedly the sedulous propaganda conducted by the Allies, which sought to assure the German people that their existence and legitimate aspirations were not involved in the struggle; that the enemy of the Allies was equally their enemy—namely the military and dynastic absolutism oppressing the peoples of Central Europe; and that the aims of the Allies found their complete utterance in President Wilson's

Fourteen Points—a sure guarantee of a settlement based not on spoils to the victors, but on principles just and fair to the peoples of all belligerent powers, vanquished and victors alike.

President Wilson's policy, in fact, was worth whole armies to the Allies; its announcement probably spared them some months of fighting. Without its reassuring pledges and guarantees, the Germans would have fought on desperately with their backs to the wall, in the belief that they were fighting for their very existence. They would in the end have been forced to surrender, but not without exacting on both sides a further terrible toll in lives and treasure.

Surely a great gain was thus obtained, and for this result the moderate sections unquestionably earn their mead of praise. President Wilson, it will be recalled, eagerly followed the trend of rational opinion in every country, particularly in England. From time to time he readily recognized that his views gained authority from the fact that reasonable people throughout the world were thinking along similar lines, and were striving under great difficulties to make themselves heard. He justified his attitude by this very fact; his words took root because the soil was favourable in every country, and the German belief in them was strengthened by the knowledge that sane people everywhere stood behind the President. Few soldiers in high positions appreciated the fact that the moderate parties in this way actually provided factors of strategic importance.

Such factors, invaluable as they proved to be, were nevertheless incidental to the main objectives of the moderate parties, which aimed at ending the war by negotiations on an honourable basis, and which previously, as we have seen, had aimed at preventing its outbreak.

During the years preceding 1914, the activity of

associations, such as the Anglo-German Society and the group of M.P.'s, who worked for an appeasement of the European situation, failed to arouse from the nation a deep seated response. The nation could not believe in the possibility of war, and the false sense of security into which the Government lulled them also deprived the efforts of the Peace groups of the necessary dynamic force. Had the full nature of the Government's agreement with France been known, the position would have been entirely changed and the country could have been effectively warned. Apart from other reasons, the fact, for instance, that a mere handful of members of Parliament persisted in sounding the note of alarm, official secrecy was the chief cause of the failure of articulate opinion to exercise a decisive influence. Indeed, the British Government in 1912 deliberately continued its policy of secrecy, as we noted in an earlier chapter, for the very reason that once the facts respecting commitments were known, the opposition would gain overwhelming strength.¹

When the War came, we observed that the objective of the moderate groups centred upon the question of mediation by neutrals, in particular by the President of the United States—mediation which, in the first instance, should take the form of ascertaining the aims of both sets of belligerents. Their success was but partial; for although President Wilson did intervene, his offer was abused by the Allies, who took the opportunity of making a defiant pronouncement. The justification for the activities of those whose efforts met with failure in this regard can be simply stated: mediation undertaken in the middle of a great war has no chance of success unless a large influential group in each country upholds reasonable war aims. If the nation as a whole views the struggle as a gladiatorial combat, the offer of mediation would be regarded as an unneutral 'move',

¹ See p. 71.

the act of a country favourable to the enemy. To work persistently for the achievement of a just settlement, at whatever point the tide of the fortune of war happens to be at the moment, whether at the ebb, or at the flow, is to perform a most vital service. If the Allied Governments had pursued this course, the War might have ended two years earlier than it did. It was a mark not of statesmanship but of crass stupidity to increase or diminish aims as the battle line moved forwards or backwards. In January 1918, as we have seen, the Allies made a declaration of terms which corresponded to the just peace advocated by the moderate parties throughout the struggle, and advocated with special force in 1916 when the Germans offered to negotiate, as we now know, on a similar basis or something approaching it; but as the prospects of Germany in December 1916, looked dark, the Allies put forth their maximum demands.

Again the moderate or rational groups in each country performed notable services in preparing, or attempting to prepare, opinion for a peace based on just principles—just to all the belligerent peoples. In no other way, it was felt, could time bring healing, mutual hatred subside, and fresh grievances leading to further conflict be avoided. Here again it cannot be said that the British groups, valiant as their efforts were, had at the time any visible effect on the Government. On the contrary, the Government, of which Mr. Lloyd George was the head, did everything in its power to remove them from Parliament. In the election of 1918, immediately after the Armistice had been declared, the crudest appeal to the crudest feelings of the populace was made by leaders of the Government, reason was trampled underfoot, feelings of vindictiveness and passionate hatred inspired by such slogans as ‘Hang the Kaiser’, put an end for the time being to the Parliamentary careers of a large number of honourable men,

and Parliament was filled by a new and strange group of 'hard-faced business men who had made money out of the War', as Mr. J. M. Keynes described them.

How paradoxical then to note that Mr. Lloyd George, who had helped to rouse the populace to this pitch of vindictive unreason, was found at the Peace Conference to be laying down principles of the 'loftiest statesmanship';¹ they justified in every particular the policy of the very men whom he had hounded out of Parliament, and whose support he could now ill afford to lose.

The following typical sentences from his Memorandum, handed to the Peace Conference at its opening, well illustrate his intentions:

'You may strip Germany of her colonies, reduce her armaments to a mere police force, and her navy to that of a fifth rate power; all the same in the end, if she feels that she has been unjustly treated in the peace of 1919, she will find means of exacting retribution from her conquerors. The deep impression made upon the human heart by four years of unexampled slaughter will disappear with the hearts upon which it has been marked by the terrible sword of the Great War. The maintenance of peace will then depend upon there being no causes of exasperation constantly stirring up the spirit of patriotism, of justice, or of fair play.... From every point of view, therefore, it seems to me that we ought to endeavour to draw up a peace settlement as if we were impartial arbiters, forgetful of the passions of war.'

A just and far-sighted peace with Germany, he added, must be supplemented by a League of Nations as the effective guardian of international right and liberty, a limitation of the armaments of the victors no less than the vanquished, and by admission of Germany to the League after accepting the Allied terms and accepting a stable and democratic government.¹

We must assume that these were Mr. Lloyd George's

¹ Gooch, *History of Modern Europe*, p. 680.

real views; surely contempt for democracy could not have been more forcibly shown than in his deliberate pandering at the 1918 Election to passions and ideas which were so utterly at variance with his real opinions. He probably calculated that his genuine views would fail to secure his return to office, and he perhaps was right in that conjecture!

The civilian population, after years of suffering and bereavement, had readily absorbed the official propaganda which pictured the enemy as criminals and monsters, and what they demanded was not a settlement but punishment of the enemy; he 'must be squeezed until the pips squeaked'. At the election Mr. Lloyd George professed to give way entirely to these demands, and those Liberals and Labour members who pleaded for a lasting settlement lost their seats in nearly every case, going down with enormous majorities against them.¹

It is not surprising that Mr. Lloyd George was a few months later to be hoist by his own petard. 370 of the members of the House pledged to hang the Kaiser, and to make Germany pay for the entire cost of the War, became alarmed at his moderation in Paris and sent him a warning telegram. In those whom he had driven from their seats, men known to the nation for their long parliamentary service, he would have found a tower of strength.

So strong indeed was the aftermath of war feeling in France and Great Britain that even President Wilson, representing the most powerful single State in the world, failed to a large extent to make the Fourteen Points the corner stone of the Peace Treaty.

¹ Mr. Buxton went down though by a small margin of 200 votes. His Conservative opponent won the seat on the contemptible slogan 'Selling our black sisters back to slavery', referring to a speech by Mr. Buxton delivered in the House, in which he pointed out the unwisdom of stripping Germany of all her Colonies.

In favour of the Treaty of Versailles, it may be said that it has assured to nearly every people in Europe, except notably the Ukrainians, a national home, although, viewing the economic and political conditions of Europe to-day, in 1932, one may well doubt the wisdom of the policy which gave to each of the liberated peoples, without exception, sovereign independence. An Austrian Empire, permitting liberal autonomy to its peoples, would have offered solid advantages to European civilization. In its broad territorial lines, affording to each people its political integrity, the settlement must now stand. The revision which responsible people favour would serve rather to strengthen the weak pillars of the peace structure, and make it enduring. In this respect, French thought does not clearly see where the true interests of France lie. To oppose any kind of revision, however reasonable and just, is to endanger the whole building for the sake of two or three wings. The surest guarantee of the sanctity of treaties is to be found in their inherent justice, and some mutual concessions must sooner or later be made in order to smooth out the exaggerations of the territorial lines, where these cause chronic grievances, and a permanent source of friction between neighbours.

Germany in particular received her full share of the excesses of the settlement. Too great territorial sacrifices were required of her in the east; the territorial access to the sea obtained by Poland cut off East Prussia from the Fatherland; the Vistula was made a purely Polish river, the frontier of East Prussia being shifted back 80 yards from the right bank; in Silesia, territory rich in mineral resources, which had been Germanic for nearly a thousand years, was eventually handed to Poland to satisfy the requirements of French security. Germany was stripped of her entire colonial Empire both in Africa and in the Far East, and the spoils

were divided among the Allies. The disarming of the country, imposed as a permanent measure, isolated Germany in a ring of armed neighbours; for her security she had to rely on the respect shown by the latter for their international obligations not to resort to war—a most excellent arrangement if all countries were in this position, but unequal and precarious when it applies to one country alone. In such circumstances the security of the armed States creates the insecurity of the disarmed. It is needless to refer to the reparations settlement, which beginning with fantastic figures has had to be successively modified. Finally, the Germans were obliged to state under duress that the sole guilt for the War lay on their shoulders. Although the falseness of this declaration has been almost universally recognized, its enforced acceptance by Germany created in the mind of its people a deep and lasting sense of injustice, the effect of which it would be dangerous to ignore. The bold enunciation of the fair and just view, uttered by the Archbishop of York at Geneva in 1932 at the opening of the Disarmament Conference, must here be acknowledged as a notable attempt to contribute to the removal of this injustice.¹

Mr. Lansing described the terms of peace as ‘immeasurably harsh and humiliating, while many of them seem to me to be impossible of performance’. General

¹ Article 231, Treaty of Versailles:

‘The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her Allies.’

At the Lausanne Conference, July 1932, the French Government opposed—unfortunately with success—the removal of this clause, as they attached a vital importance to its moral and political significance: but the reparation agreements were cancelled in favour of the payment by Germany of a final figure of £150 millions.

Smuts, one of the signatories of the Treaty, declared at the time:

‘We have not yet achieved the real peace to which our people were looking. The work of making peace will only begin after a definite halt has been called to the destructive passions which have been devastating Europe for nearly five years. The promise of the new life, the victory for the great human ideals for which the peoples have shed their blood and their treasure without stint, the fulfilment of their aspirations towards a new international order are not written in this Treaty.’

REASON AND MODERN WAR

The moderate parties in the belligerent countries thus failed in great part to realize their main objectives. One may well ask whether failure is inherent in the nature of the case and must always occur because of the need to create a war mind in the civilian population. For unlike wars of the past, which were in comparison mere trials of strength between professional armies, and left little mark upon the belligerent peoples, modern war calls for the collaboration and energies of the entire nation, almost every man, woman, and child has a part to play, all the industrial resources of the State, its entire agricultural activities, are placed on a war basis; hard intense work, long hours, and little leisure, are required of every citizen. When the whole people is thus organized on a war footing, it follows that its morale is a matter of grave moment at every stage of the struggle.

In countries like U.S.A. and Great Britain, which were not invaded by the enemy, or were scarcely threatened by invasion, people could not long maintain the required effort, if they believed the enemy to have reasonable aims. The part played by propaganda is thus of vital importance, and this propaganda must inevitably strengthen the extremist section of opinion.

It will paint the enemy in monstrous colours; for a people cannot be induced to support for long the killing of men and the starving of women and children, whom they regard as innocent as themselves. No lie is then too base if it serves the purpose of strengthening the will to fight. The population has to be whipped up into a state of indignation, bordering on hysteria and sometimes frenzy, and under such conditions individuals who can talk of any other aim than that of crushing the enemy until he cries for mercy are regarded as traitors.

In countries which are partly occupied by the enemy scope for action by a moderate party is almost negligible; though no doubt the invaded portion of the population, having seen and experienced the horrors of war, *as it affects both sides*, would gladly accept any honourable plan which would bring the struggle quickly to an end and restore every one to normal life.

The writer, when visiting shortly after the War the devastated regions of France, found no feelings of vengeance among the population. In the midst of churches in ruins, and temporary shacks used as dwellings, the refugees seemed to be dominated by a hatred of war, and not of a particular enemy. In Belgium, in the part occupied by the Germans, the writer was told by a Belgian, who passed from childhood to adolescence in the midst of German soldiers billeted in his home, that the native population became attached to these soldiers, some of whom were quartered for years in the same house. When the time came for them to go to the shambles at the front, the Belgian householders parted from them with tears: no propaganda could convince them that the enemy soldiers were not men like the rest. If truth were equally communicable to the civilian population behind the lines, war could not long be carried on. In war-time the civilian population

is fed on abstractions, false and vile and poisonous, both as to the motives and methods of the enemy—this is essential if the war is to be prosecuted at all for any length of time. The moderate parties are, therefore, handicapped from the first by their assumption that the enemy is not of different clay from the opposing side, an assumption from which the civilian population far from the front shrink with indignation.

Perhaps the most formidable handicap which faces them is the war-time censorship. This powerful instrument, devised in the first instance to keep secret military and naval plans, the daily movement of troops and fleets, their strength and mobility, and so forth, is also used by the Governments to prevent any weakening of the will to war on the part of the civilian and fighting population. In order to effect this purpose, as much moderate discussion, as many facts as possible in regard to movements of moderate opinion in the enemy countries are kept away from the columns of newspapers by direct and indirect means. One of the most striking cases was the practical boycott by the Press of the Reichstag Resolution of July 1917,¹ in favour of a peace of understanding, a boycott which caused a group of M.P.'s to discuss in Parliament the pronouncement of the German popular will in an attempt to give it adequate publicity.

Innumerable prosecutions against writers and distributors of peace pamphlets, including in one case a distributor of a sheet containing simply a copy of the Sermon on the Mount, could be cited. Under the Emergency Powers afforded by the Defence of the Realm Regulations, the Government could legally suppress anything it liked; consideration of expedience alone limited its action.

Again, if the moderate elements in each belligerent country are sufficiently large and powerful, statesmen

¹ See p. 145.

could not so easily 'blunder and stagger' into war. Differences would, probably, in such a case be capable of peaceful solution with the help of some third party. If, then, a great war has broken out, we may be fairly sure that the moderate section of the communities at war are not influential, and failure will inevitably attend their efforts to bring the war to an end by negotiation. In the making of peace, their counsels, even if regarded by statesmen as sagacious, are likely to be of little avail against the clamorous demands of the victorious peoples. For the passionate movement which has carried them to victory does not cease at the Armistice—it sweeps into the Conference Chamber and expends its momentum with disastrous effect on the peace treaties. The conflict does not cease. It takes a new form: for the world is reorganized on the basis of punishment, and the defeated are made to serve as a scapegoat for the world catastrophe.

It is all perfectly senseless, for the world must sooner or later return to the question of a just settlement, and to a revision of the gross excesses in the peace treaties. Though this is perfectly clear to every one, few people act upon the knowledge during or immediately after war. People cannot be rational in war. This is not surprising. War is such a diabolical method that it must necessarily corrupt the ends it professes to seek. To resort to engineering and chemical massacre, to the weapons of mass starvation, to the vilest falsehoods and most poisonous propaganda, to rely upon the verdict of vast forces which, once set in motion, are no longer controllable, and the effects of which are incalculable and unpredictable, and to imagine that men, having thus completely abdicated their reason, can keep steadfastly before their eyes reasonable aims, is to imagine the impossible. Again, in resorting to war for an adjustment of frontier, in sacrificing the lives of millions, in ruining the civilized world for a strip of territory, be

it Alsace, Upper Silesia, or a portion of Morocco, men show an insane want of proportion.

Of course those who strive during war to preserve a balanced outlook do so for one supreme purpose—whether they say so flatly or not—and that is *to put an end* to the horror by negotiation, and this noble purpose is their supreme justification. The disproportion between the instrument and the end is ever present to their minds. The difficulties besetting their path under the circumstances described in these chapters are insuperable. It is, therefore, upon the improvement of the machinery to prevent at all cost the outbreak of war that mankind must concentrate its efforts.

It is not until we take a long view that we can make a just estimate of the value of the activities of the moderate parties. Although they may be said to have failed in their immediate objectives, they must feel satisfaction in the fact that the new principles upon which inter-State relations are increasingly based provide a crowning vindication of their theories, half-formed and tentative as they necessarily were. The seeds which they sowed during the lean and barren years have borne fruit in the institution of the League of Nations. In spite of its imperfections and its obvious weaknesses and failures, it offers solid and far-reaching advantages.

Before the War, the progressive parties condemned exclusive alliances and secret ententes, and saw in them not a means of security, but a means of certain war. Under the terms of the Covenant of the League, States have a duty to avoid such methods; security is the common concern of all and no treaty is valid unless it is publicly registered at Geneva. Before the War, as we have shown, the moderate parties stressed the need of personal contact between one Foreign Minister and another; the League supplies them with a

method far exceeding their expectations. It consists of conferences, not between two Ministers merely, but comprising all the Great Powers who are members of the League—meetings which are held three times a year.

Again, the moderate parties tried to forestall war by advocating changes in the *status quo*. Although the legal provision for revising treaties is very slender, the constitutional powers of the Council meeting regularly show promise of growth and of providing the necessary means, and as confidence grows in the capacity of the League to prevent the outbreak of war, the opposition to changes, which feeds itself on strategic needs, will prove less intractable. Already in the course of its work of settling disputes, the Council has been asked to allocate territory disputed by members of the League.¹

Again, the moderate parties before the War urged in vain upon their Governments a policy of disarmament. Now it is the continuous concern of the States of the entire world, and thanks to the organization of the League, this concern is expressing itself in continuous organized efforts towards the goal.

Mediation during the War was regarded as an unneutral, unfriendly act. To-day mediation by a third party is a legal right, and its acceptance by a disputant a legal obligation. In the event of war or threat of war, the State or States involved must invoke the mediation of the Council; and it is the right and duty of every other member not a party to the dispute to invoke the intervention of the Council if the disputant fails to do so. In putting an end to hostilities, the Council has several successes to its credit, and it has intervened in a score of disputes that might have led to hostilities. There is no doubt that had the League Council existed in 1914 the world war would have been prevented; the history of the last twelve days preceding the outbreak abundantly proves that no Government

¹ See writer's *League Council in Action* (Oxford University Press).

deliberately plotted to bring about the War.¹ Confusion, delayed messages, misunderstandings, fear, panic were the final arbiters.

In this enumeration of checks and safeguards against war which democracies have won for themselves, one misses one reform in the methods of government advocated in the past, namely a more direct control by Parliaments of the foreign policy of their Governments. We saw in previous chapters that such a reform was regarded as vital: proposals were made to set up a Committee of Members specializing in foreign affairs whom the Foreign Secretary would consult from time to time: in British constituencies after the War, democratic control of foreign policy became a popular cry. These ideas and desires sprang from a determination never again to allow Governments to pursue policies leading to secret engagements binding the countries to go to war, policies which, it was held, could never have been carried out if foreign offices and diplomatic services were in close and vital touch with public opinion everywhere: it was generally felt that the august aloofness attached to ambassadorial rank, and often the social traditions of the office holder, had made foreign affairs an aristocratic preserve, and diplomats in the expert abstraction of their duties took too narrow a view of their task; diplomacy in the years preceding the War seemed too much like a game in which countries were moved about like pawns on a chess board; it had not conceived its essential task to be the peaceful adjustment of the relations of peoples.

Little wonder that the cry for democratic control became insistent; obviously democracy would be the hollowest mockery if a Cabinet working in secret

¹ See Professor Mowat, *Concert of Europe*, p. 330.

'The theory that any Government deliberately plotted to bring about a European war in 1914 must be abandoned. There is no evidence to support it, either as regards Russia or Germany.'

through its diplomatic agents, and affected in turn by them alone, could pursue uncontrolled a course which might call for the sacrifice of the lives of hundreds of thousands of citizens.

Direct control in Great Britain has, however, not been achieved, either in the shape of Parliamentary Committees or of any other changes in the relations of the Foreign Secretary with the House of Commons. In the conduct of foreign policy, the British Foreign Secretary has in relation to the House of Commons still an almost unchecked initiative. He wields far more power than any other Minister: any big measure by a Minister of some other department generally takes the form of a Bill, which is disputed line by line in the House; any great step undertaken by the Foreign Secretary is often, if not generally, purely administrative; the House may wish to discuss it, and this it may often do, but in most cases it has to discuss a *fait accompli*; even when it is asked to ratify a treaty it does little else than to recognize a *fait accompli*.

That any conquests in the field of direct democratic control of foreign policy are likely to occur in the near future is scarcely probable. Broadly speaking, the Cabinet still exercises purely oligarchic powers in the field of foreign affairs—powers which are subject in varying degree in France and the United States to the check of the Parliamentary Committee and the Senate Committee respectively.

To mention the last two instances is enough, perhaps, to show the comparatively limited value of such institutions in themselves as safeguards, and as offering adequate checks against war. Possibly direct control is a will-o'-the-wisp which, in the absence of other expedients, public opinion has vainly pursued. In fact, agitation in Britain for Committees has lately subsided. British opinion seems to realize that in the League of Nations the popular will can play a more effective part, because

through the League it secures collective control over the conduct of the one or more Governments threatening peace. The power of a Government has been gravely restricted by the Covenant, with its machinery for requiring observance of its clauses, and notably also by the provisions of the Kellogg Pact. No Government can resort to war for whatever purpose without violating treaty obligations. Was it not Spencer who argued that liberty required not so much the control of Government as the limitation of its scope? The Covenant of the League and the Kellogg Pact mark the end of the inter-State anarchy implicit in the notion of State sovereignty—a notion which has far outlived its usefulness and no longer fits the facts. Indeed the sooner this misleading term disappears from political theory, the sooner can the world be organized on a basis of law.

The common people in every country are in an immeasurably stronger position to-day. The activities of peace parties have now the backing of international law; Foreign Secretaries are bound by treaty obligations to carry into effect the principles which they advocate, and it is the duty of a patriot to cultivate an international outlook; the war parties must in every case and under every circumstance be treaty breakers.

Can a more fitting epilogue to the efforts of the moderate parties be conceived than a change of this substantial character in international relations? The activities of thousands of unknown enlightened people, of members of Parliament in every country working against the stream, must find in this accomplishment a well-deserved satisfaction.

THE TREATY WITH FRANCE, 1904

THE Treaty of 1904, arranged by Lansdowne and Delcassé, formed the starting-point of the *Entente Cordiale*. It comprises several agreements of which the declaration respecting Egypt and Morocco is the most important.

I. 'His Britannic Majesty's Government declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Egypt. The Government of the French Republic declares that they will not obstruct the action of Great Britain in that country by asking that a time limit be fixed for the British occupation or in any other matter . . .'

II. 'The Government of the French Republic declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Morocco. His Britannic Majesty's Government recognises that it appertains to France . . . to preserve order in that country (Morocco), and to provide assistance for the purpose of all administrative, economic, financial and military reforms which it may require . . .'

VIII. In regard to Spanish interests, 'the French Government will come to an understanding with the Spanish Government, which shall be communicated to the British Government.'

IX. 'The two Governments agree to afford one another their diplomatic support, in order to obtain the execution of the present declaration.'¹

The Agreement was signed on 8 April 1904, but secret articles were also signed at the same time, and these were not revealed until 1911. The object of these secret articles has been well described by Professors Grant and Temperley (see *Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 424-5):

'In plain language these secret articles provided for the

¹ See *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, pp. 312 et seq.

annexation of part of Morocco by Spain. That meant, of course, that the rest of Morocco would or might be annexed by France, whenever she chose, and that England would have to give diplomatic support to this arrangement. . . . The secrecy of these arrangements is in itself suspicious. For while France secured Italy's goodwill before April 1904 by promising her Tripoli, and Spain's goodwill shortly afterwards by promising her Morocco, nothing was done by England or France to enlighten Germany as to the "secret deal" over Morocco German statesmen may well have feared that all German commerce, as well as political influence were to be shut out from Morocco It seems that the French statesmen saw further than the English and recognised that this secret obligation was bound to produce a situation in which England would be led into the French camp. . . '

Under the Liberal Government that followed the Lansdowne administration, the Entente developed into something far wider than an undertaking to give mutual diplomatic support for a free hand in Egypt or Morocco. It grew into a secret obligation of honour requiring Great Britain to defend France by arms, if she found herself attacked by Germany (see Appendix II).

THE TIED HANDS OF PARLIAMENT

- (i) *The Military 'Conversations' between the French and British General Staffs from 1906.*
- (ii) *The 'assurances' of Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons.*

(i) The 'conversations' between the French and British War Offices, which were authorized neither by a Cabinet decision nor by Parliament, began in 1906.

In a memorandum written by Brigadier-General Sir G. N. Nicholson on 6 November 1911 (*British Documents*, vol. vii, pp. 626-8), it is stated:

'In January 1906 when French and German relations were strained in connection with Morocco, the General Staff with the approval of the Minister of State concerned began to consider what steps could be taken to render military assistance to France in the event of an unprovoked attack on that Power by Germany, should His Majesty's Government in such an event decide to render such assistance.'

The memorandum betrays the fact that as crisis followed crisis, the arrangements relative to the dispatch of a British Expeditionary Force were extended and perfected.

In 1908 an elaborate military scheme was laid before the Sub-Committee of Imperial Defence, presided over by the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith; it included among its members, 'the Marquess of Crewe, Viscount Haldane, and Mr. McKenna'. The question of rendering naval assistance to France in the event of an unprovoked attack on that Power by Germany was considered at a second meeting of the Sub-Committee on 17 December 1908. At a third meeting on 23 March 1909, the question of rendering military assistance

was further discussed, and the plan submitted by the General Staff was judged to be a 'valuable one, and the General Staff should accordingly work out all the necessary details'.

At the beginning of the 1911 crisis the plan was further revised by the General Staff. 'In April last, when the recurrence of tension between France and Germany seemed not improbable, the possibility of at once despatching six instead of four Divisions besides the Cavalry Division came under consideration, and revised tables for the larger force with accelerated dates of mobilization were worked out. The tables for movements by rail, embarkation, sea transport, and disembarkation were similarly revised It was submitted and explained in detail at the Committee of Imperial Defence on 23 August last (1911), the Prime Minister presiding, and Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. McKenna, Mr. Winston Churchill, and the First Sea Lord being present.'

When the Agadir trouble reached its climax, General Sir Henry Wilson went to Paris, and on 21 July 1911—the very day when Mr. Lloyd George, speaking in the Mansion House, uttered his dangerous warning to Germany—Wilson and General Dubail, Chief of the French General Staff, put their signatures to a remarkable agreement. It included measures relating to (1) the composition of the British Expeditionary Force, (2) its sea transport, (3) arrangements for landing at Havre, Rouen, and Boulogne, (4) the provision of temporary camps, (5) railway transport in France. Finally, the '*zone de concentration*', i.e. the section of the front to be occupied by the British troops was set between Arras, St. Quentin, and Cambrai. It expressed the hope that the British troops would be in the fighting line by the thirteenth day of mobilization.

The statement that these agreements had no binding force on the Government or Governments finds its usual

place in these memoranda, but increasingly such statements acquire a fictitious value.

Some three weeks after the signature of the agreement by General Sir Henry Wilson, British Director of Military operations, and General Dubail, we find the British Military attaché in Paris reporting a conversation with the new French Military Chief, General Joffre, on 24 August 1911.

'The new Chief', he reports, 'attaches the very greatest importance to the co-operation of a British Expeditionary Force, which concentrating somewhere between Douai and Cambrai, and falling on the right flank of the German advance, might produce great, and even decisive results. But it would have to be sent early in the day; its intervention, for instance, on the 18th day of mobilisation, might not prove a bit too soon. As regards the provision by the French authorities of the requisite railway transport to convey the British contingent to the points of concentration which might ultimately be fixed on, he anticipates no difficulty, even should all the six British divisions be dispatched.

'He stated that arrangements have recently been made by which the carrying powers of the French railways in War have been considerably increased.'

The Grey-Cambon letters (see p. 49), exchanged in 1912 in order to put into writing the position created by the concentration of the British Fleet in the North Sea, and the French Fleet in the Mediterranean, finally established the British obligation of honour to defend France, if attacked by Germany.

(ii) The House of Commons on several occasions had been left to understand that there were no obligations of any kind to support France by arms.

On 30 March 1911 (see *Parl. Debates, Commons*, vol. 23, p. 1490):

'Mr. Jowett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, if, when he came into office, there was in existence any under-

standing or undertaking, expressed or implied, in virtue of which Great Britain would be under obligations to France to send troops, in certain eventualities, to assist the operation of the French Army.

‘Sir E. Grey: The extent of the obligations to which Great Britain was committed was that expressed or implied in the Anglo-French Convention laid before Parliament. There was no other engagement bearing on the subject.’

The Anglo-French Convention of 1904¹, to which Lord Grey was referring, promised merely diplomatic support to France for the exercise of a free hand in Morocco. The French Foreign Minister was disturbed by this reply (see p. 189, vol. vii, *British Documents*); he said to Sir Francis Bertie, ‘that he regretted that Sir E. Grey had found it necessary to repudiate so strongly the existence of any unknown agreement between England and France . . . He (Cruppi) knew what had passed between the Departments of the two Governments, for he had seen the dossier. He would have preferred that there should have been a suspicion that an understanding did exist for possible eventualities’ (9 April 1911).

Sir Edward Grey replied as follows to the French Foreign Minister in a letter to the British Ambassador in Paris:

‘Foreign Office, April 10, 1911.

My dear Bertie,

There would be a row in Parliament here if I had used words which implied the possibility of a secret engagement unknown to Parliament all these years committing us to a European war. But I send you a copy of the question and answer. I purposely worded the answer so as not to convey that the engagement of 1904 might not under certain circumstances be construed to have larger consequences than its strict letter.

But Parliament would have under these circumstances to put its own construction upon it. At the time of the Algeiras Conference if Germany had fastened a quarrel upon France,

¹ See Appendix I.

I think the agreement of 1904 would have been construed by public opinion here as entailing in spirit the obligation to help France. An absolute engagement on the other hand is more I think than Parliament is prepared for.

[E. Grey].

Four months after the conclusion of the Grey-Cambon agreement (letters exchanged 22 November 1912), Lord Hugh Cecil said in the House of Commons on 10 March 1913:

‘There is a very general belief that this country is under an obligation arising out of an assurance given by the Ministry in the course of diplomatic negotiations, to send a very large armed force out of this country to operate in Europe. This is the general belief.’

He was thereupon interrupted by Mr. Asquith: ‘I ought to say that is not true.’

A few days later, in answer to Sir W. Byles, Mr. Asquith stated (24 March 1913):

‘As has been repeatedly stated, this country is not under any obligation, not public and known to Parliament, which compels it to take part in a war. In other words, if war arises between European Powers, there are no unpublished agreements which will restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or Parliament to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in a War.’

On 11 June 1914, in answer to Mr. Joseph King, Sir Edward Grey said that the answer of the Prime Minister just cited, ‘remains as true to-day as it was a year ago’. This was within two months of war, as Lord Loreburn comments in his book, *How the War Came*, and Lord Loreburn further remarks: ‘The ordinary man would understand a denial of obligations to include a denial of obligations of honour.’

‘If the purpose of the Ministerial answers be to give plain information,’ Lord Loreburn proceeds, ‘it is very

difficult to maintain that the letters of 22 November¹ warranted these Parliamentary assurances.'

In substance these assurances were not true.

If Sir Edward Grey failed to realize the position then, his speech on 3 August 1914, in the House of Commons, brought him face to face with the question.

Lord Loreburn writes (*How the War Came*, p. 225):

'This remarkable speech began with an elaborate effort to prove that the House of Commons was perfectly free to determine either for peace or war. It ended with a passionate declaration that this country would be disgraced if we did not declare war, and the reasoning of the speech proved that Sir Edward Grey had committed himself irretrievably. It left the House of Commons convinced that it had in honour no choice but to join France in arms. It is an epitome of the reasoning by which Sir Edward Grey had been brought to believe that he could say and do what he said and did without limiting his freedom of action. But if this is legitimate we ought not to keep up the pretence that we are a self-governing nation in foreign affairs.'

¹ Grey-Cambon letters, see p. 49.

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